

# THE WESTSIDER

## Noise Coalition Responds

To the Editor:

Thanks for your comprehensive article ("Chopper Issue Still Making Noise" Nov. 13, 1997). A few comments.

1. Realities of any century can be changed. If even slavery could be abolished and women could gain the vote, helicopters can be banned from NYC - what is required is the political will to do so.

2. The actual number of helicopter flights over NYC in 1996 far exceeds 150,000. There were 169,000 flights last year from Manhattan's four heliports, Kennedy and LaGuardia airports and Floyd Bennett Field, plus an indeterminate number of overflights neither originating nor terminating within city boundaries, which no agency even tabulates.

3. While Ed Towns' office may not be receiving complaints on Liberty's new route, we are - from residents on both sides of the Hudson, who tell us that areas near the Hudson are inundated with helicopter noise. The notion that helicopters flying over the Hudson and East Rivers are away from residential neighborhoods is a fallacy.

4. The only heliport in Manhattan with federal funding, to my knowledge, is the Downtown heliport at Wall St.

5. The Helicopter Noise Coalition of NYC (HNC) has always exempted emergency flights from the ban we seek on (non-emergency) helicopters over NYC land

and waterways.

6. A no-fly zone is needed precisely to prevent helicopters originating elsewhere from flying over the city, ruining our lives in the process.

7. HNC would welcome the opportunity to participate in the City's Helicopter Master Plan, a role so far denied us by the Mayor despite our membership of over 16,000 residents and our high profile on this issue.

8. The problem has gone beyond voluntary compliance by helicopter pilots. HNC's recent Helicopter Noise Study documents how intrusive and potentially dangerous these flights are to city residents, even when pilots stick to established routes. Besides, past experience shows that voluntary compliance just doesn't work.

9. Kudos to Reps. Maloney et al. for introducing federal legislation to regulate this industry - regulations desperately needed and long-overdue, for a problem that plagues not only major cities but suburbs, rural areas and wilderness areas nationwide.

10. We're sorry if some politicians find HNC abrasive. We have had to sue the city to close the E. 34th St. heliport precisely because polite entreaties to politicians to solve the helicopter problem have fallen on deaf ears for the past 20 years.

11. Our contention has always been that moving helicopter routes from neighborhood to neighborhood merely shifts the problem and is no solution. When neighborhood fights neighborhood, and borough fights borough, the helicopter industry is the victor.

Ultimately, helicopters are the common enemy - they draw community protest wherever they fly. Helicopter flights over NYC land and waterways threaten our health, safety and well being. A strong, united community response can ban helicopters from New York City skies.

Sincerely,  
Joy A. Held  
President

Helicopter Noise Coalition of  
NYC

## LETTERS

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LETTERS

# Congress urged to regulate city's copter noise, safety

By Geoffrey Williams

Politicians and activists gathered at the West 30th Street heliport on Monday to promote a bill recently introduced in Congress that would empower the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to regulate helicopter noise and safety in New York and other cities with populations of more than 500,000.

If enacted, the Helicopter Noise Control and Safety Act would give the FAA authority to determine if the aircraft pose a threat to the city's public health and welfare, and to develop a plan to reduce that risk.

Put forth by New York Congresspersons Carolyn Maloney, Jerrold Nadler and Edolphus Towns, the bill would severely curtail helicopter overflights that some activists, residents and politicians say have "long plagued" New York City.

State and city officials are now "powerless to control the noise" emitted by the thousands of helicopters that take off, land and fly over the city each day, maintain the U.S. Representatives.

Only the federal government, not local or state agencies, can regulate air space, Federal District Judge Sonya Sotomayor ruled in a January court decision that angered city officials and anti-noise activists.

"The FAA [should] have the authority to cut down on the unsafe and noisy helicopters that are chipping away at our city's quality of life," said Maloney. "We've already had several deaths in the city because of helicopter accidents. That is several too many."

Prior to Monday's press conference, the three delegates solicited support for the bill from colleagues, calling helicopters "loud and

dangerous."

"Help put a stop to the problem of helicopter noise and potential threats to safety before it gets out of hand," wrote Maloney, Nadler and Towns in the October 31 letter to their Congressional colleagues.

The Helicopter Noise Control and Safety Act would allow the FAA to restrict the day, time and frequency of city takeoffs, landings and overflights, the types of helicopters used, and the operations of particular heliports.

Under the law, city, state and local agencies or heliport owners could submit regulatory plans to the FAA, which would have the authority to modify or implement them. Should the bill become law, administrative, emergency, media and military helicopter operations would be exempt from any restrictions.

"I am confident that this bill will gather the support it needs in Congress to pass and make our city, and other American cities, safe from the noise and danger of unregulated helicopters," said Maloney.

There have been five helicopter crashes, resulting in five deaths, in New York City since 1983.

"New York residents report helicopters blasting overhead every two minutes during peak hours and during days and weeks when travel is heavy," stated Maloney, Nadler and Towns in their plea for support.

"There has been a 23-percent increase in helicopter takeoffs and landings in New York City since 1991."

That increase, say anti-noise activists, has exacerbated a problem that the city has long ignored.

"The 34th Street heliport is [in violation] of the city's noise code every hour of

every day it is in operation," said Joy Held, president of Helicopter Noise Coalition (HNC), a group of 15,000 activists that sued the city in June in an effort to close the East Side heliport, and eventually eliminate all non-emergency overflights in the city. "Those standards go back 18 years."

HNC commissioned a private Environmental Impact Study (EIS) on the 34th Street heliport in September and October, learning that noise caused by helicopters there was 12 times what city codes allow. Held maintains the findings of her group's EIS mirror those of a similar one done by the city in 1995.

"The city has noise codes it refuses to enforce," said Held, who likened the city's relationship with what she calls a "renegade, rogue helicopter industry" as the "fox guarding the hen-house."

State Supreme Court Judge George Daniels has said he will decide shortly whether he plans to render a decision on the pending class-action lawsuit (filed by HNC, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney and Assemblyman Steve Sanders, among others) based on evidence already submitted by both sides, set a hearing date to review what's already been submitted, or set an open hearing so he can call witnesses and hear testimony.

"The aim of this bill is to

ensure that city residents recapture some measure of the peace and tranquility that has been taken away from them by constant helicopter activity," said Nadler.

In April, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's tentatively announced his bid for a city-wide master plan on helicopters, when he resolved to close the 60th Street heliport (following a fatal crash there), move its operator, Johnson Controls (now American Port Services) to 34th Street (evicting its longtime operator, National Helicopter), and later open another "mega-heliport" at Pier 76 on the West Side.

Since then, National has been evicted, American has replaced them, but 60th Street has yet to close. Officials say the facility will remain open until the end of the year.

National, which moved to the downtown heliport in August, was barred from the facility the following month for failure to provide evidence of insurance.

Despite Giuliani's pledge to cut helicopter traffic by up to 40 percent, the city has

gone ahead with its \$488,000 helicopter master plan, currently being conducted by consultants Edwards and Kelcey Engineers.

The plan, which encom-

passes all facets of the city's long-term helicopter policy (including heliport locations, operations and air traffic), is funded by federal, state and city money, and should be completed by early next year.



Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney wants the FAA to begin regulating helicopter traffic over big cities.

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## Congress urged to curb city copter noise, danger

By Geoffrey Williams

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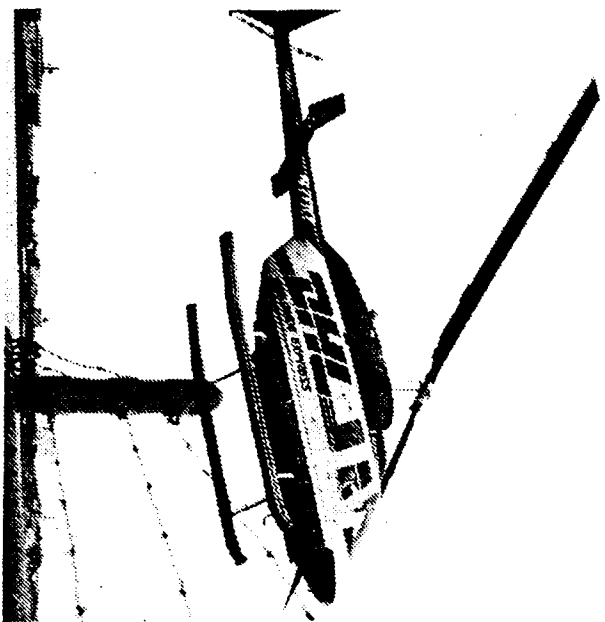
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Activists are pressuring politicians to give the FAA power to regulate helicopters in large cities.

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# OUR TOWN

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20 • OUR TOWN 27TH ANNIVERSARY • NOVEMBER 26, 1997

## 100 EAST SIDE HEROES

### JOY HELD

#### *Noise Reducer*

**JOB:** Helicopter activist

**BIO:** President of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City. The coalition, which is concerned about the noise and dangers caused by helicopter traffic, wants to ban all non-emergency flights over the city.

**YEARS ON EAST SIDE:** 30

**MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** The creation of a united, city-wide grassroots group to stop helicopter traffic. "We have put the industry and politicians on notice and mobilized a city protest."

**PHILOSOPHY:** "It's gratifying to know that community activism can still bring results."

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# Town & Village

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## City finalizing copter plan with little say from public

By Geoffrey Williams

Two months after the city's first public meeting on its much-disputed strategy for the city's heliports, officials have finished compiling data for the master plan, which they will reportedly release next week.

The city's Economic Development Corporation (EDC), which is heading up the master plan, will reportedly hold the second of three public meetings on Decem-

ber 2, to discuss the goals and objectives of the heliport and helicopter master plan, as well as the current progress of a \$350,000 study of that plan.

At the first meeting on September 18, at One Police Plaza, senior representatives from the EDC were met with jeers and boos by a mostly anti-helicopter, anti-heliport crowd.

The master plan is being undertaken, city officials say, to "evaluate, current

heliport and helicopter operations," and to set a long-term plan for "efficient operations in a constructive and safe manner."

New York City's helicopter activity is run out of four heliports in Manhattan -- East 60th Street, East 34th Street, West 30th Street and Pier 6 south of Wall Street -- as well as out of JFK International and La Guardia airports, and at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn.

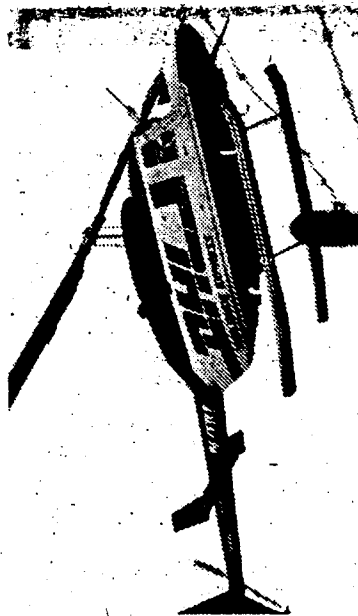
In addition, a significant

amount of aircraft traffic passes through city airspace but does not use its infrastructure, like news helicopters, military aircraft and advertising airships.

More than 155,000 helicopter flights a year take off or land in New York City, according to data collected so far by Edwards and Kelly, the engineer group compiling the EDC's master-plan study.

In its study, the engineers

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The city's master plan for heliports will come out with little consultation with community leaders.

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## Public input little on copter plan

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focused on four major issues: helicopter noise, community opposition, system redistribution and regulatory authority, and safety considerations.

Most noise complaints have come from residents annoyed with sightseeing flights over the Upper East Side and Upper West Side, Midtown, and Brooklyn Heights, which can number up to one every minute and a half. The loudest noise reading of the study, however, was registered at a Roosevelt Island home, at 90 decibels, despite it being far from any city helipad.

Community opposition to increased helicopter traffic in the city has grown in recent years, according to the study, with politicians signing on to class-action litigation against the city and heliport operators of city helipads. Most citizens groups opposed to such overflights are calling for a complete ban of all non-emergency helicopter flights in New York.

A class-action lawsuit, filed by Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, Assemblyman Steve Sanders, the Helicopter Noise Coalition (HNC), among others, calls for the closure of the 34th Street heliport.

In addition to those against helicopters and heliports in general, are those against the city's master plan, and how it's being conducted. One source, who wished to remain anonymous, balked at the city's survey of public sentiment regarding the master plan, saying only 75 people were polled on the issue (those who filled out questionnaires at the original September 18 meeting), as opposed to more than 1,000 members of the helicopter industry.

"There's no equity here," said the source.

The city announced its master plan program in April, and started implementing it before Edwards and Kelcey began compiling its master-plan study.

Since then, the 60th Street heliport has been closed, long-time 34th Street heliport operator National Helicopter was evicted, and the city announced the closure of the 60th Street heliport by the end of the year, and the possibility of a new "mega-heliport" at or near Pier 76 at West 30th Street.

Because the Downtown heliport near Wall Street is the only FAA-certified facility in the city, safety regulations cannot be imposed by the federal agency on the city's three remaining heliports, according to the study.

Edwards and Kelcey are reportedly considering some type of uniform regulations to circumvent such a loophole in citywide safety guidelines.

In addition, the city has asked for waivers from the NYPD and NYFD to erect

external, free-standing fuel tanks at the 34th Street heliport, insiders say, a move that has activists seething. The city has already been turned down for similar tanks at the Downtown heliport.

Another part of the master plan, a Brooklyn Naval Yard helicopter storage and repair facility, is also being pushed by the city, sources say. Such a facility has been balked at by community activists bent on blocking existing heliport activity and any future expansion of the industry.

All data collection and research for the master-plan study occurred between July 23 and October 17, and will be released this week, upon request, to interested community boards, according to sources close to the master-plan study.

The EDC's second information meeting will be held at the second-floor courtroom at Brooklyn Borough Hall, at 209 Joralemon Street, at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, December 2.

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# THE WESTSIDER

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NOVEMBER 27-DECEMBER 3, 1997

## Study: Chopper Noise Serious Problem *Noise Coalition Releases Long-Awaited Survey*

BY M.L. MADISON

According to the results of a survey of helicopter noise, city residents have reason to be up in arms.

The survey, which was conducted by Cowan Acoustical Associates and released last week, found that the city-owned 34th Street Heliport is in constant violation of New York City noise standards and exceeds the

allowable daytime noise levels in the New York City Noise Code. The survey also found that the heliport "exceeds the changes in noise level that result in vigorous community action" as documented in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines, and that the noise levels created "approach a hazardous noise environment" that causes permanent hearing loss over prolonged exposure.

"This study shows that helicopters emit noise at very dangerous levels," said Joy Held, president of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City (HNC).

"Any sustained noise over 85 decibels causes permanent hearing damage, and when helicopters take off and land they are providing these levels of noise."

Residents also worry that when the city closes the 60th Street Heliport at the end of the year, as scheduled, the helicopter traffic will be transferred to the 34th Street Heliport and make dangerous noise levels rise even higher, disturbing residents and patients at the nearby New York University Medical Center.

In addition, HNC claims that the 34th Street Heliport has been

operating for more than 20 years without the required zoning permit. HNC, whose goal is the complete and permanent shutdown of all commercial helicopter traffic over New York City, released the survey results as part of its class-action nuisance lawsuit against the city. Co-plaintiffs in the lawsuit include Maloney, State Assemblymembers Steven Sanders and Richard Gottfried, and five community groups with 16,000 members - Manhattan East Community Association (MECA), Roosevelt Island Residents' Association (RIRA), Sutton Area Com-

munity (SAC), the SoHo Alliance and the Tribeca Association.

As this paper reported two weeks ago, U.S. Reps. Jerrold Nadler, Carolyn B. Maloney and Edolphus Towns have joined to propose legislation that would empower the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to issue helicopter traffic and noise restrictions in accordance with the needs of any county or municipality of more than 500,000 people. ■



*Mary Black  
at Town  
Hall  
Friday night, see p. 16*

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# Northeast helo ops fight for their lives

Characterizing the threatened closure by the city of New York of one or more heliports on the city's Manhattan Island as "a regional problem with international implications," the Eastern Regional Helicopter Council (ERHC) has hired a full-time consultant and is seeking increased donations from members in an attempt to counter the deluge of anti-helicopter sentiment in the "Big Apple," the city's local nickname. With well-funded helicopter opponents organized behind the expressed goal of banning all helicopter operations in the city, except for emergency operations, ERHC believes the situation has reached "critical mass" and become a testing ground for the entire industry.

The NYC heliport situation was the main topic of discussion among the approximately 75 people at ERHC's annual meeting, held October 24 to 26 at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut. Although a formal review of the problem was not scheduled until the afternoon of the 25th, the topic came up several times during informal discussions throughout the weekend as well as during the session on IFR-specific issues. "What good are copter GPS approaches to us, if we can't land in Manhattan," voiced one attendee, echoing the feelings of many of those present. "We may as well start looking for another line of work now, because if the CEO can't ride his helicopter to the city, he's not going to keep it."

And as Matt Zuccaro, ERHC's new consultant, stressed, the NYC heliport problem goes far beyond the northeast region, where a majority of the nation's corporate helicopters are concentrated.

"This is a testing ground for the helicopter industry, not just New York," he said.

"In other cities in the U.S. and internationally," he continued, "people on both sides of the issue are closely watching how this comes out. And you better believe the anti-helicopter people are better organized and funded than we are. Via the Internet and other media, the New York group is in close and frequent contact with like-minded groups in Hawaii and the Grand Canyon." Zuccaro, well known in the helicopter community as a former chairman (1990) of the Helicopter Association International (HAI), is president of Zuccaro Industries, a New York-based consulting firm.

## History of Contention

Helicopter usage in New York City goes back decades and, with it, anti-helicopter sentiment with its focus on noise, privacy and safety. A significant watershed event was the New York Airways Sikorsky S-61L accident atop the Pan Am building on May 16, 1977. One person on street level was killed by fragments of rotor blades after the large twin-engine helicopter rolled over on the skyscraper-top heliport when its right main landing gear collapsed. Since that time, roof-top helicopter operations have been suspended in the city.

Of the four riverside heliports that evolved over the years, two—the East 34th and East 60th Street heliports on Manhattan's east perimeter—are owned by the city and managed by its Economic and Development Corp. (EDC). The West 30th Street Heli-

port, well known in the helicopter community as a former chairman (1990) of the Helicopter Association International (HAI), is president of Zuccaro Industries, a New York-based consulting firm.

support and political will. Meanwhile, anti-helicopter emotions have risen to a fever pitch.

For more than 25 years, ERHC has worked to improve the safety

writer Joy Held. Called the Helicopter Noise Coalition, it is said to have some 15,000 members. Although a separate entity from Messenger's Task Force, the coalition professes similar goals.

The fatal crash of Colgate-Palmolive's BK 117 at the East 60th Street Heliport on April 15 fanned the already hot fire of anti-helicopter emotions. Suddenly, closure of this heliport became an issue, even though the primary noise complaints had previously been directed against the frequent sight-seeing operations conducted from the East 34th Street Heliport by National Helicopters, a subsidiary of Island Helicopters which also operated the facility.

Then on August 13, the city evicted National/Island from the East 34th Street Heliport, over non-payment of back taxes. The EDC transferred control of the heliport to Johnson Controls (now American Port Services), which operates the East 60th Street Heliport, with the intention that 60th Street would be closed by the end of the year. National attempted to continue its sight-seeing operations from Wall Street Heliport, but was forced to stop due to an insurance issue, and moved to Linden Airport in New Jersey.

Both the 60th Street and 34th Street Heliports are open for the time being, but only 60th Street has fuel. According to Pat Wagner, manager of the 60th Street Heliport and now 34th Street, Island sealed off its in-ground fuel tanks at 34th Street. American Port Services has requested permission to bring in a new above-ground fuel system to the facility, but wants assurance from the

EDC that 34th Street won't be closed arbitrarily in the near future. So far, no such assurance has been received. Each heliport continues to operate on a one-month termination permit, said Wagner, adding that APS personnel are working extra shifts to keep both heliports open.

The fate of East 60th Street Heliport is more uncertain. NYC Mayor Rudy Giuliani has indicated his intention to close it permanently by the first of the year. If this happens before a new fuel system is installed at 34th Street, fuel will be available on only one heliport in the city—West 30th Street.

Although Wagner told the ERHC meeting that she expected the situation to cool down after the November elections, Zuccaro disagreed. "We have to face the fact that helicopters are an issue and the issue is not going to go away. This is not a joke. It's not a drill," he said. "There's no doubt in our minds that New York City needs four heliports. If one is closed, total traffic doesn't decrease. It just moves to the remaining heliports, increasing noise and congestion and actually reducing safety in those areas." Helicopter traffic figures since the time National/Island was evicted from East 34th Street and the heliport has been open for fewer hours bear out this theory.

But the anti-helicopter coalition doesn't see it that way. For them, closing one heliport is one step closer to their ultimate goal of shutting them all down. Said Joy Held, executive director of the Helicopter Noise Coalition, "What makes more sense? Flying a handful of fat cats around in noisy machines while people on the ground suffer from the noise and pollution. Is that fair?"

Other specific goals of the organization include proposed state legislation that would prohibit heliports in urban areas and establish a \$10,000 fine for landing in heliports not possessing current zoning permits (as is the case with NYC's heliports); proposed federal legislation that would require FAA to restrict the airspace and routes used by helicopters in and around NYC and other cities with more than one million population; and the indefinite cancellation of the proposed Pier 76 Heliport (on the Hudson River, which borders Manhattan's West Side).

The eviction of National/Island Helicopters, far from appeasing the Helicopter Noise Coalition, has given it momentum. On the other hand, the voluntary elimination of East River and Central Park (a large park in the center of Manhattan)

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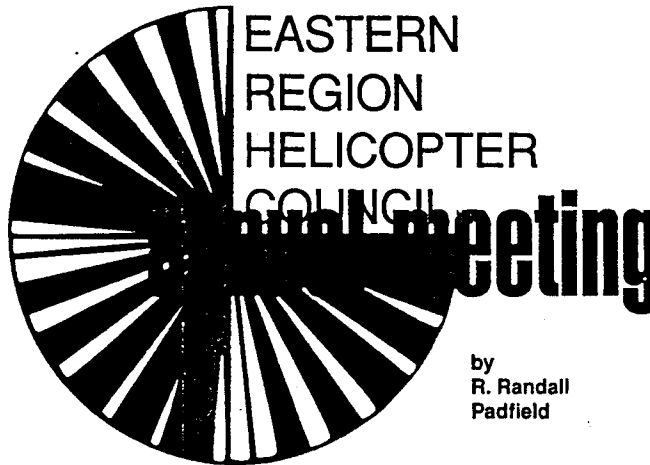
Dick Dutson, ERHC chairman, is optimistic that members will contribute funds to support its efforts to preserve the heliports and helicopter operations in NYC.

ERHC board members Heinz Graumann, Analar Corp., and John Kadnar, Rocky Mountain Helicopters.

Board member Kristina Wetzel, AT&T, and newly elected board member, Cliff Whiting, Gannett Companies. Also elected at the meeting were Diane Dowd, General Electric, and John Fagan, NYC Police.

Jay McGowen, Port Authority manager of Wall Street Heliport and ERHC board member.

Steve Gray, ERHC board member and former chairman, found little chance for meaningful dialogue at the Helicopter Task Force meetings he attended.



by  
R. Randall  
Padfield



ERHC presented a plaque of appreciation to the New York City Police Department crew who helped rescue pilots and passengers involved in Colgate-Palmolive's BK 117 accident at Manhattan's East 60th Street Heliport. (L to R) Herman Velez, copilot; Patrick Walsh, pilot; John Drzal, scuba diver; Eric Tollefsen, scuba diver; and Richard Troche, crew chief. Three of the four people survived the accident.

port on the Hudson River side of the island is under the control of New York State's Hudson River Conservatory. Only the Wall Street Heliport, on the southeast end of the island, was built with federal funds, and it will revert to EDC control in 2006. The Wall Street Heliport is operated by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Plans for other heliports, including the use of a retired aircraft carrier and a refurbished pier on the Hudson River, have languished for lack of public

help reach an equitable compromise, the ERHC board attended the first meetings of the Task Force. But after a short period of time, the goal of the Task Force changed from noise reduction to no less than the complete elimination of helicopter traffic on, over and around Manhattan. The ERHC board decided dialogue was no longer possible and stopped attending the meetings. In 1997, a grassroots anti-helicopter group evolved under the leadership of Manhattan resident and freelance



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Arlene Feldman, FAA regional administrator, Eastern Region, encouraged CEOs to attend helicopter-noise meetings in the Big Apple.



Patricia Wagner, East 60th Street Heliport manager, said American Port Services has requested longer opening hours at East 34th Street.



ERHC's special advisor Matt Zuccaro, president of Zuccaro Industries, is spearheading the council's Heliport and Airspace Protection Program.

overflights by Liberty Helicopters, another sight-seeing operator which flies out of the West 30th Street Heliport, has received some positive reaction from local community boards and politicians, according to Zuccaro.

The problem is both complex and ever-changing. And frustrating. "If we voluntarily change routes over one area, people in another area begin to complain about helicopter noise," said Dick Dutson, ERHC chairman. "The quickest and most effective solution is to fly at higher altitudes, but we are limited to 1,100 feet over the rivers near Manhattan and by dense traffic when we request higher altitudes in the area's Class B airspace."

Two of ERHC's biggest obstacles are getting the word out to area helicopter operators and getting them to comply with procedures that—hopefully—help decrease the antagonism against all helicopters. "ERHC is not a controlling agency," Dutson continued, "and at meetings like this one, we're pretty much preaching to the choir."

Indeed, not present at the meeting were representatives of a group considered by many to be the worst offenders—the newscasters. Zuccaro showed a video he took of a single-engine television helicopter hovering out of ground effect, but below the tops of some Manhattan buildings—precisely the kind of flying that generates the most angry complaints from city residents. "Where is this guy going if he has an engine failure?" Zuccaro asked rhetorically. "No one on the ground has been injured since the New York Airways accident, but all it will take is one accident on land and the whole city will be shut down to helicopters."

ERHC has earlier spoken with television program directors and pilots, and has some sympathy for the pilots. "The New York television stations are in a ratings war," Zuccaro said, "and the pilots are caught in the middle. Some of the pilots indicated that, if they don't get close to a news event, they're told the station will find someone who will. In the long run, though, they're hurting us all."

But ERHC members are not without sin either. "One of the hardest things for us to defend is when we're confronted with proof-tail number, company name, time and place—that one of our member's helicopters has overflowed a noise-sensitive area," said ERHC board member Steve Grey. [To field complaints, ERHC operates a Helicopter Hotline, 888-ERHCINFO and 914-353-6050, which asks the caller for

just such information.] "Even if we personally fly in a noise-friendly way," Gray said, "we are judged guilty by association with those who do not."

"Many pilots simply do not take noise-sensitive areas seriously," echoed Zuccaro.

Dutson said, "I've said it before and I'll say it again: the level of pro-

ing the situation."

The issue has become so politically charged that no city politician dares to speak out in favor of helicopter activity. According to one attendee at the ERHC meeting, even city planners avoid including helicopters in their plans because they know they'll only cause problems. As Zuccaro put it, "Helicopters are press fodder for the politicians."

Indeed, when asked who the ERHC considered its allies in NYC, the board members were at a loss to name anyone of influence on their side. The best they could offer was apathy. "I think the majority of people in Manhattan don't really care about helicopters either way," said Dutson. "If you ask the man on the street how many helicopters the island has, he probably has no idea."

Said Zuccaro, "The majority of people I have met and talked to are decent, concerned citizens with legitimate issues. They have realistic expectations and are willing to discuss their concerns in a rational manner."

Still, Zuccaro and the ERHC board see the master plan as perhaps the best way to ensure the future of helicopter operations in the city—although they fear the light at the end of the tunnel could end up being an on-coming train. To counter the anti-helicopter forces, they decided to implement the "Heliport & Airspace Protection Program" (HAPP).

The immediate goals of HAPP are to gather data and information in support of helicopter operations in the city and to establish a permanently staffed ERHC office. HAPP's ultimate mission is to preserve the heliports and airspace in the New York area. ERHC members have been requested to respond to a "voluntary dues assessment" to support the effort, and an initial contribution of \$36,000 kicked off the fund drive. The level of activity the council can sustain will be determined by the amount of support received.

ERHC's request for financial support from members is motivated, not just because of financial need, but also because the high-level executives, who arguably reap the most benefit from NYC's heliports, are reluctant to speak out publicly in favor of the heliports. "The owners of corporations must come forward at noise meetings," asserted Arlene Feldman, regional administrator of FAA's Eastern Region, at the ERHC meeting. "And they must speak to the elected officials."

What CEOs do behind the scenes and how much influence they have are, of course, other matters.

The current helicopter issue may be not only a watershed event for New York city helicopter operations, but also a "crossroads for the council," in the words of Dutson. Over the last few years, the annual meeting has evolved from being a gathering of "good ole S-76 drivers hoping to win a TV in a raffle," to a more serious event that includes educational seminars. Now the council has taken on the mantle of "defender of the industry."

According to Frank Jensen, HAI president, HAI gave ERHC the lead position on the NYC heliport issue, at ERHC's request. "New York City is their turf," he said. "They're in the front lines. They know the situation and the people involved." HAI, as well as the National Business Aviation Association, are backing up ERHC when requested. Two HAI staffers, Richard Wright, director of safety and flight operations, and

Scott DiBiasio, operations department assistant, attended the meeting in Mystic Seaport. An additional point of contact is HAI board member Jim Church, who also serves on the ERHC board and as its IFR committee chairman.

Although optimistic that ERHC will garner strong support from its members, Dutson harbors no illusions about the gravity of the situation. "We would like to work out a plan with the mayor's office that would be a better alternative to closing heliports. But the industry has already made concessions with little give from the other side. If our best efforts fail, we would have to consider litigation as our final option," he said. "But that's the absolute last thing in the world we'd want to do. In any case, it's going to cost money, lots of money, which is another reason for our voluntary dues assessment."

## MORE NEWS FROM MYSTIC—SOME GOOD, SOME BAD

Jim Church, ERHC's IFR Committee chairman, reported that the committee's work to lower the required weather minimums for alternate airports for IFR helicopter operations will soon bear fruit. He anticipates that FAA will issue an NPRM on the subject before the end of the year and after the customary comment period; he expects to see the final rule by next spring.

Church also said he had attended what he considered a "very beneficial meeting" with new FAA Administrator Jane Garvey. Garvey met for two hours with the board of directors of HAI, of which Church is a member. "I would like to think that this first meeting is the start of a long and open relationship," he said.

FAA plans to run another test of a portion of the proposed helicopter GPS route system between Boston and North Carolina, according to a report by Tom Salat, who was unable to attend the meeting. Expected to start in November is a trial of the route between Baltimore and Philadelphia. According to Salat's report, a 25-nmi section of the route system along the Hudson River—between the Tappan Zee Bridge north of New York City and the Verrazano Narrows Bridge to the south—created a problem with obstacle clearance because of the narrowness of the available airspace near Manhattan. The problem was solved by designating this section of the route as an approach segment for the purposes of GPS navigation.

The 120-day test program involving Boston and New York Centers to establish a procedure whereby helicopters operating IFR were permitted to fly when the weather is reported below fixed-wing IFR minimums, but above helicopter IFR minimums, has been completed and was successful. The procedure is now policy and will eventually be applied nationwide.

Steve Gray, ERHC board member and chief pilot of Keystone Helicopters, reported that his company has received approval for a non-precision GPS approach to a hospital helipad in Sayre, Pa. The procedure was designed by STI Technologies. However, because the approach is private, it is classified as a special approach procedure and is not included in the normal database supplied for GPS equipment. Others may use the approach, but must contact the owner for the specifics. Cost of the approach, from design to approval, was about \$25,000.

Gray said he has requested that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania fund 200 GPS approaches in the state. Pennsylvania is one of six states given responsibility for allocation of federal funds for transportation use.

Ron Reber of Bell Helicopter Textron and Robert Torgerson of Boeing gave a short briefing on the progress of the Bell Boeing 609 civil tiltrotor. Asked about the aircraft's noise footprint—a subject clearly on the minds of those present—Reber said the 609 was expected to be about as loud as a medium-size helicopter.

Jay McGowen, manager of Wall Street Heliport and ERHC's VFR committee chairman, said a Continental Airlines 737 captain has been granted approval to fly customers and advertising banners in boat-pulled parasails at altitudes up to 1,000 ft over New York Bay and 500 ft over the Hudson River; he promises to provide constant traffic advisories. Also, pilots can expect to encounter laser-light displays during the holidays; last year the lights were placed on top of the World Trade Center and Empire State buildings. McGowen also said he expects to see unmanned aerial vehicles, UAVs, flying over NYC within five years; FAA Eastern Region issued a draft advisory circular on the subject.

HAI operations department assistant Scott DiBiasio cautioned that Congress is becoming more and more involved in local airspace issues. He also said FAA has issued a draft of an advisory circular (AC 150-5390-2A) dealing with heliport design that will "make it economically infeasible to maintain heliports in New York City." In a nutshell, the AC takes heliport requirements for transport-category helicopters and adopts them for general use; for example, the minimum space requirement is increased by 400 percent. DiBiasio said FAA has agreed to consider HAI's concerns before releasing the AC for public review. □

HRC P374

# RESIDENT

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## Letter to the Editor

To the editor:

In response to your article "Enemy Territory," Nov. 19:

Community opposition to helicopter overflights comes not only from Manhattan - this a multi-borough fight.

Liberty Helicopter's new routes limited to the Hudson River are hardly "successful" for West Side residents living near the Hudson or for folks visiting waterfront parks there. Nor were West Siders consulted about the change, brokered through Brooklyn Rep. Ed Towns' office and the Eastern Region Helicopter Council (FRHC). The way the ERHC "works with the community" is by

pitting one neighborhood or borough against another, to benefit the industry.

The Helicopter Noise Coalition's recent helicopter noise readings of 94 decibels at Rivergate are mirrored by the city's own recent findings of over 90 decibels at a Roosevelt Island residence and the city's 1995 Environmental Impact Statement which recorded equivalent readings for locations near the East 34th Street Heliport (sustained noise over 85 decibels causes permanent hearing loss!).

Residents and hospital patients near the East 34th Street Heliport should prepare for a renewed onslaught of helicopter noise, fumes and threats to safety when heli-

copter traffic is rerouted there following the city's closing of the East 60th Street Heliport by year's end.

While I was ultimately reinvited and did attend the Helicopter Master Plan Technical Advisory Committee meeting on Nov. 20 at EDC, the public and the press were barred from this meeting, in violation of the New York State Open Meetings Law. This law mandates that meetings held by government or quasi-governmental bodies, which are funded by public dollars to discuss issues of public policy, must be open to the public.

Joy Held  
President

Helicopter Noise Coalition

# Study: Chopper Noise Serious Problem Noise Coalition Releases Long-Awaited Survey

BY M.L. MADISON

According to the results of a survey of helicopter noise, city residents have reason to be up in arms. The survey, which was conducted by Cowan Acoustical Associates and released last week, found that the city-owned 34th Street Heliport is in constant violation of New York City noise standards and exceeds the allowable daytime noise levels in the New York City Noise Code.

The survey also found that the heliport "exceeds the changes in noise level that result in vigorous community action" as documented in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines, and that the noise levels created "approach a hazardous noise environment" that causes permanent hearing loss over prolonged exposure.

"This study shows that helicopters emit noise at very dangerous levels," said Joy Held, president of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City (HNC).

"Any sustained noise over 85 decibels causes permanent hearing damage, and when helicopters take off and land they are providing these levels of noise."

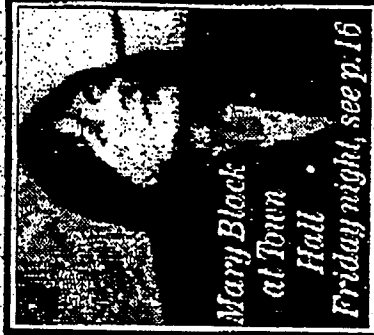
Residents also worry that when the city closes the 60th Street Heliport at the end of the year, as scheduled, the helicopter traffic will be transferred to the 34th Street Heliport and make dangerous noise levels rise even higher, disturbing residents and patients at the nearby New York University Medical Center.

In addition, HNC claims that the 34th Street Heliport has been

operating for more than 20 years without the required zoning permit. HNC, whose goal is the complete and permanent shutdown of all commercial helicopter traffic over New York City, released the survey results as part of its class-action nuisance lawsuit against the city. Co-plaintiffs in the lawsuit include Maloney, State Assembly members Steven Sanders and Richard Gottfried, and five community groups with 16,000 members — Manhattan East Community Association (MECA), Roosevelt Island Residents' Association (RIRA), Sutton Area Com-

munity (SAC), the SoHo Alliance and the Tribeca Association.

As this paper reported two weeks ago, U.S. Reps. Jerrold Nadler, Carolyn B. Maloney and Edolphus Towns have joined to propose legislation that would empower the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to issue helicopter traffic and noise restrictions in accordance with the needs of any county or municipality of more than 500,000 people. ¶



Mary Black  
at Town  
Hall  
Friday night, see p.16

## Copter foes are noisy

By Alec MacGillis  
*The Brooklyn Papers*

Brooklynites who feel besieged by noisy helicopter traffic this week had a chance to air their complaints to those in charge of addressing the problem citywide — but most went home with their tempers still whirling.

The city's Economic Development Corporation, which is creating a master plan for heliports and helicopter traffic in the city with the world's most whirlybirds, held its second of three public information meetings Tuesday night at Borough Hall. The EDC's technical action committee for the helicopter issue is trying to devise ways to regulate helicopters — something the city has little formal authority to do.

Robert Grotell, an engineering consultant hired by the EDC, answered questions written on cards by a volatile crowd of several dozen people. Two points of great relevance to resi-

See **COPTER NOISE** on page 4

dents of western Brooklyn who must deal with heavy helicopter traffic emerged in Grotell's responses:

First, the city is strongly considering closing down the heliport it owns at East 60th Street in Manhattan, which is used primarily by corporate helicopters.

As Imogen Taylor, an aide from state Sen. Martin Conner's office, pointed out, that move will likely bring many more helicopters to the Downtown Manhattan Heliport (DMH) near Wall Street, the takeoff site closest to Brooklyn Heights.

Asked after the meeting about this possible result of closing the 60th Street heliport, Grotell said a large percent of the traffic to 60th Street would likely move to the nearest alternative heliport, at 34th Street.

Earlier in the meeting, though, Grotell had said that the city was trying to limit the 34th Street heliport to the low traffic levels it has experienced ever since the city evicted Island Helicopter from the heliport — once the busiest in the world — in October.

It is quite possible, then, that the corporate traffic would move to the Port Authority-managed, state-of-the-art DMH heliport — which, as Taylor pointed out, is operating only at 26 percent capacity and is car-

rying a heavy debt. Indeed, Island Helicopter found its way to DMH after leaving 34th Street, and partly as a result of that, DMH's traffic went up 55 percent this September, compared to last September.

Second, and more positively, the much-dreaded helicopter-repair facility planned for the Brooklyn Navy Yard is no closer to becoming a reality. Grotell said that the potential builders of the facility have not responded to a May letter from the city which informed them that their environmental assessment statement was inadequate.

Other good news for helicopter complainants throughout the city — except for those living on the extreme West Side of Manhattan — is that operators of tourist helicopters have agreed not to fly over land anymore. Most of the tourist helicopters now take off at the West 30th Street heliport, fly north along the Hudson's eastern shore (thus irritating West Siders) and then fly back south closer to the New Jersey shore.

For Brooklyn neighborhoods, this means that the only helicopters now flying overhead should be only corporate ones and the occasional media and police ones. All television news helicopters are based in New Jersey, and, according to Grotell, scheduled copter trips to the New York airports stopped in 1994.

As far as Brooklyn residents in the audience were concerned, even without the tourist traffic the noise is excessive. "What right do these people have to come in my house and wake up my granddaughter?" demanded Henry Street resident Joseph Ignieri. "When a kid's got a boom box or a guy's got a lousy muffler, they give them a summons, but these people can just say 'drop dead'."

Ignieri also noted that data given out by the EDC indicated that they had placed a noise monitor on his roof, as he had volunteered to let them do — but he said the monitor was never actually installed.

And Vinegar Hill resident Nicholas Evans-Cato said that one day last month, four helicopters had flown over Hudson Street in the space of only 10 to 15 minutes. "Normally I hear one or two a day, but that many, that's just excessive," he said.

According to preliminary data collected at two different sites in Brooklyn Heights, Grotell said, corporate helicopters (which are typically larger and louder) were producing decibel levels in the low 80's in the Heights. That means a passerby would perceive the noise as almost three times as loud as the normal, 65-decibel noise level in the area.

The EDC's literature also said that the city has recently received more complaints from Brooklyn Heights than from any other neighborhood.

To hear some West Siders tell it, though, Brooklyn Heights has it easy compared with what they endure. "We hear it all day long; we've lost whatever peace we had," said Colleen Caron of Chelsea.

"We now feel we'll never even be able to open the window in spring. It's appalling — why should we be subjected to this?"

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# The New York Times

# SundayStyles

Sunday, December 7, 1997

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## LETTERS

### Public Nuisance: Media Copters

To the Editor:

Media helicopters are pernicious, not stylish or necessary ("A Fight for On-Air Supremacy," Nov. 9).

Ask Upper West Siders who were awakened at 6 A.M. on Nov. 12 by media choppers that were "covering" the transport of the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree down the Hudson River.

Ask marathon runners buzzed by low-flying news choppers, which had to make four emergency landings that day.

Ask residents near Central Park who got

only four hours' sleep for evenings preceding the Garth Brooks concert as helicopters reconnoitered and who suffered throughout the event because news helicopters refused the HBO offer to pool coverage.

Ask beleaguered audience members who can't hear Shakespeare in the Park or Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors because of choppers overhead.

And then ask the media, the Mayor, the Federal Aviation Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency why New

Yorkers have to be tortured in this way.

JOY A. HELD  
President, Helicopter Noise Coalition  
of New York City

HNC P 378

# Chopper Study Under Fire

## Second Public Hearing Draws Criticism

BY MATTHEW BELSON

The second public meeting for the Heliport and Helicopter Master Plan for the City of New York was held last Tuesday, at Brooklyn Borough Hall amidst concern from the public that they continue to be excluded from the decision making process by the city's Economic Development Corporation (EDC).

"They (EDC) don't want to hear from the public and have public input on how they're doing," exclaims Joy Held, president of the Helicopter Noise Coalition.

In attendance at the meeting were representatives from the city's Economic Development Corporation and the consulting firm of Edwards and Kelcey Engineers, Inc., hired to conduct the city's helicopter and heliport study.

"The purpose of Tuesday's meeting was an active exchange of information. We felt we achieved that goal and are pleased with the results," said

EDC spokesperson Jennifer Wasmer.

Unlike the first public meeting in September, where an opportunity for open dialogue was available, Tuesday's proceedings were tightly controlled without an "open-mike" session. After an update of the study's findings by project manager Robert Grotell, from Edwards and Kelcey Engineers, Inc., and EDC spokesperson Shirley Jaffe, members of the public were asked to submit their questions on index cards, which were then read and answered out loud.

"There were partial answers and no answers," said Held following Tuesday's meeting. "This was not a dialogue with the public. They found a way to keep us from speaking at this meeting but they will not silence us."

Elected officials and groups like the HNC, local community boards whose neighborhoods are directly affected by helicopter overflights and nearby heliports, expressed concern over the lack of timely notification for these two public meetings organized by the EDC and what is perceived to be a one-way flow of information.

"I attended both meetings and I would say overall that the city is making a pretense of taking pub-

See CHOPPER, Page 6

## CHOPPER

Continued from Page 1

lic input," explains Susan Branagan, deputy counsel for U.S. Rep. Carolyn Maloney. "We were not officially notified until the day before the meeting. Materials that were necessary from intelligent input were sent out in the mail only the day before. The meeting itself was very tightly controlled. There was no exchange between EDC and persons attending, there was negligible opportunity for input."

"If the city really wants public input and review, why not publicize the meetings? Why not get an actual understanding of the problem, rather than a small sample taken only from those attending the one poorly publicized meeting?"

### Quality of Survey Questioned

The method by which noise samples were taken, of neighborhoods affected by helicopter noise, has drawn sharp criticism from the community. The Community Participation Questionnaires handed out at the EDC's first public meeting in September were used to determine where noise monitors could be most effectively placed. A summary of the master plan available at Tuesday's meeting mentioned that "... discussions with the EDC, the study's Technical Advisory Committee, individual residents, various Manhattan and Brooklyn community boards, and the Brooklyn Helicopter Task Force ..." were also included in assessing where to place these noise monitors.

A total of 14 monitoring sites were selected - the four heliports and 10 remote sites which included Brooklyn Heights, Roosevelt Island, Battery Park City Esplanade, and Riverside Park at West 86th Street. The

cont.

EDC collected 75 surveys from residents of neighborhoods affected by helicopter overflights and heliport noise compared to 300 surveys collected from helicopter users.

"If they were serious about their public survey they would not hand them out at meetings, but would send them instead to the community boards for distribution and place ads in the paper," said Held.

Surveys collected by the EDC at Tuesday's public meeting have increased by more than 300. The monitoring of noise emanating from helicopter overflights and their operations at the four city heliports was conducted during a one-week period from Oct. 13 through Oct. 19.

"This week is traditionally the busiest time of the year for helicopter traffic," explains EDC spokesperson Wasmer. "We have hired these consultants who are experts in this field and we believe their analysis is very comprehensive."

Since the week-long monitoring period in October, helicopter traffic patterns have shifted from the East River over to the West Side where a voluntary "Hudson River Exclusion" zone up to 1,100 feet has been established by helicopter operators. Sightseeing flights are now limited to flying over water and fly northbound above the Hudson River along the Manhattan shoreline and then southbound closer to New Jersey. The East 60th Street heliport, which is city owned, is slated for closure in February.

While residents on the East Side applaud the reduction in local helicopter activity the residents of Chelsea and Clinton notice an increase in helicopter overflights and heliport activity.

"We hear the tourist helicopters all day long," says Colleen

Caron from the West 400 Block Association for West 21st, West 22nd, and West 23rd Streets. "We have essentially lost whatever peace we had in the neighborhood."

Although the helicopter industry operators have voluntarily altered their sightseeing patterns, flights over land continue and there is nothing to prevent the operators from returning to the original flight paths. Most of the larger helicopters flying directly overhead are corporate helicopters based in New Jersey and Long Island. The local television networks "news choppers" have also been criticized for loitering over city neighborhoods for long periods.

"In terms of hovering helicopters, our experience has been that they are mainly news helicopters based in New Jersey," explains Grotell. "There are no formal guidelines that news media helicopters must adhere to other than all applicable FAA regulations."

The recent Helicopter Noise Control and Safety Act, introduced in Congress as legislation by Rep. Carolyn Maloney, Rep. Jerrold Nadler, and Rep. Edolphus Towns, would empower the FAA to regulate and restrict helicopter flight operations. The Maloney-Nadler-Towns bill "may include curfews on the numbers and times of helicopter operations, restriction on the types of helicopters used and any other restrictions on helicopter operations that may be necessary to protect public health and welfare."

The scheduled closure of the East 60th Street heliport and the reduction of activity at East 34th Street means that air operations at the Downtown Manhattan and West 30th Street heliports have increased. And so have the noise complaints by West Side residents.

"Clinton has solved its problem but Chelsea has inherited this problem," says Cheryl

Kupper, president of the Council of Chelsea Block Associations, who attended Tuesday's meeting. "It takes more than a month to deal with an issue. I think it was done deliberately to move the tourist routes over the Hudson River this fall when people are inside. What about the noise in the spring and summer when people will be opening their windows?"

Even with a Technical Advisory Board (TAC), composed of 20 members from the helicopter industry as well as community board representatives, there are still feelings of isolation and confusion over the goals and workings of the city's Heliport and Helicopter Master Plan which is supposed to be completed in March, 1998.

"The worst thing the EDC and the consultants did was to sell this document as a master plan," says JoAnn Macy, past chair of Community Board Four and its representative on the TAC. "A master plan is always thought of as something coming at the end of a project. This document is the beginning, a study and analysis. It's a shame that the city is not working more closely with the Helicopter Noise Coalition. They have a wealth of data they have been collecting since the fall of 1995."

Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger's Helicopter Task Force also feels excluded from the lines of communication with the EDC and prevented from taking part in the two TAC meetings held so far.

"The master plan is shutting out the people who are most affected by this problem and the people with the most experience dealing with the problem," says Lisa Daglion, press secretary for Messinger. "The major con-

cern that we have is that information flows only one way. We have asked to be represented on the TAC which was denied and the city refused to send people to our task force meetings."

Under this sharp criticism, the EDC believes it has been inclusive of the public and elected officials in the discussions of the master plan.

"The community boards are actively involved in the TAC," explains Wasmer. "All of our information has been presented to the community in layman's terms."

Rep. Maloney disagrees.

"I am dismayed that the public has not been adequately included in the process," says Maloney. "And I am disturbed that the city has not appointed an elected official to the Technical Advisory Committee for the city's Helicopter Master Plan. That's why the bill I introduced into Congress requires public comment, to protect the public from this kind of exclusion."

When asked how an individual citizen could get involved and voice any concerns, EDC spokesperson Wasmer commented, "They can call the EDC and the Manhattan and Brooklyn Helicopter Task Forces. We are seeking to work together."

Not according to Joy Held, president of the Helicopter Noise Coalition.

"We are seriously considering a lawsuit regarding the lack of public participation in the plan," says Held. "We regret resorting to the law to get the city to be responsive to community concerns."

A third public meeting for the Helicopter and Heliport Master Plan will occur, but as Wasmer explains, "A date has not been scheduled but will be soon so we can assure that notices will be sent out."



# OUR TOWN

## *East Side Year In Review*

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### HELICOPTER ROW STILL FLIES

The battle over helicopter traffic over the city reached new heights in 1997. The formation of a grass-roots group opposed to all non-emergency helicopter flights, the fatal crash of a Colgate-Palmolive company helicopter at the East 60th Street heliport last April, and the introduction of a federal bill to give the FAA power to regulate the industry, combined to keep the helicopter issue on the front burner.

Last February, the group known as the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City, was formed to fight

what its members called the health and safety risks caused by helicopter flights. The coalition, which is suing the city to fully close the East 34th Street heliport, wants to ban all non-emergency flights over the city.

Safety concerns pitched last April when the Colgate helicopter crashed and new efforts to close the East 60th and the East 34th Street heliports were launched.

Last August, the city kicked out National/Island Helicopter from East 34th Street and the Economic Development Corporation, which owns and manages both sites, gave control to Johnson Controls (a.k.a. American Port Services).

Legislative efforts moved ahead in 1997 as East Side Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, along with other representatives, introduced a bill to Congress to give the Federal Aviation Administration teeth to regulate the helicopter industry.

Another bill in the works would reopen the Environmental Protection Agency's office of noise abatement to address the issue of helicopter noise.

# Town & Village

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NEW YORK, NEW YORK, JANUARY 1, 1998

## Year in Review



Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney urged the FAA this year to begin regulating helicopter traffic over cities.

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Jan. 1-7, 1998

## *The Heliport Debate Rages On*

### **To the Editor:**

EDC stands alone in approving their conduct of the NYC Heliport and Helicopter Master Plan Study ("Chopper Study Under Fire," Dec. 11-17):

1. The noise monitoring component is hardly comprehensive. Only three of the 14 sites monitored were at people's homes, and only one of these residences bordered a river - hardly a comprehensive sample of the helicopter noise residents in the five boroughs are experiencing.

2. Telling the industry when and where noise monitoring would take place enabled the industry to alter flight paths to avoid noise measurements (as the industry has done many times in the past when they knew of

## **L E T T E R S**

scheduled community site visits).

3. As only a handful of the city's community boards and no elected officials or Helicopter Task Force representatives sit on the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the TAC is hardly inclusive.

4. Barring the public and the press from observing TAC meetings violates the New York State Open Meetings Law.

Nor can the community derive comfort from the new sightseeing routes. Helicopter sightseeing flights purportedly limited to flying over water are routinely seen above West End Avenue and Riverside Drive. And those that do stay over the Hudson still disrupt the lives of nearby residents.

The mayor also appears to be having trouble keeping his word regarding the closure of the East

60th Street Heliport and the promised 30-40 percent reduction in helicopter traffic in NYC. Originally the mayor announced his intention to close the East 60th Street Heliport immediately following the horrible crash there last April. Then the deadline for closure was extended to the end of the year. Now the proposed closing is slated for February. What is the mayor waiting for? Why doesn't he close the heliport now and give the beleaguered nearby residents and workers some relief? Actually, the longer he delays, the more members join the Helicopter Noise Coalition to protest all city heliports and all non-emergency helicopter flights in and over NYC. We call on the mayor to heed community protest against this intrusive industry.

**Joy A. Held**  
President, Helicopter Noise Coalition

# Chop Chop

Quick, Before It's Too Late, Say Whirligig Worriers, Clamp Down on City's Helicopter Activity by Corey Kilgannon

In May of 1977, the heliport atop the Met Life building was closed after the blade from a New York Airways helicopter flew off, killing five on the landing pad and a female pedestrian on Madison Avenue.

Ever since, anti-chopper folks have been railing about the dangers of helicopter traffic above the city. With last week's crash at the West 30th Street heliport anti-chopper sentiment is heightened anew.

On New Year's Eve, a Liberty Sightseeing Tours helicopter hit a building at the heliport while landing. There were no serious injuries, but anti-helicopter groups say the incident further proves the danger of choppers and that, next time, they won't be so lucky.

As far as the East Side goes, helicopter traffic has decreased. Since National Helicopters was evicted from the East 60th Street Heliport last summer, most of the tourist flights are run by Liberty from the West 30th Street heliport. The East River is no longer a flight route.

But Upper East Side activists are still worried with whirligigs.

"It's just an indication of the kind of danger we're exposed to every day," said Joy Held, president of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City. Held lives several blocks north of the 60th Street heliport.

An April 15 crash Near the East 34th Street heliport killed a Colgate-Palmolive executive and injured several other passengers. After that crash, the city said it would close the heliport 30 blocks up town. Cynics said the politically correct decision was actually necessitated by nearby construction on the FDR Drive and on Roosevelt Island's Southtown project.

Held, whose group is suing to close the East 34th Street Heliport because of noise nuisance and insufficient permits, complained that the mayor did not fulfill his April promise to close the 60th Street Heliport by the end of the year and to reduce helicopter activity by 30 to 40 per cent in the city.

A favorite method of travel for the Hamptons-bound set, and time-strapped executives, helicopter travel is in ever-increasing demand.

Recently, the city released a request for proposals to replace the West 30th Street facility with a large, modern heliport at Pier 76 at 36th Street. A \$344,000, FAA-funded helicopter master plan commissioned by the city's Economic Development Corporation, is scheduled to be released in the upcoming months. Held complained of a lack of community input in what she called "a blueprint for helicopter traffic for the next 20 years."

"We have hundreds of thousands of flights a year over Manhattan. All it takes is one helicopter crashing into a high-rise power lines or a highway," said Held. "We're not fear-mongers — we're talking about the realm of possibility." The 60th Street landing pad, she warned, is awfully close to neighboring high-rises.

"Do we have to wait for the next cataclysmic event before we do something about this, or are we going to take the preventative steps now?" she said. "We don't want to say, 'I told you so.' We don't want to be proved right on this."

Held, who makes it her business to monitor such things, said newspapers did not cover two other crashes into the Hudson River on Aug. 13 and 14 and four emergency landings during swarming helicopter traffic over the New York City Marathon.

"There's an awful lot going on that people don't know about," said Held, who can list the deadly helicopter crashes that occur every few years. "With this volume of helicopter traffic you have over the city with its high-density population, we're looking at a major disaster."

Referring to last week's crash, Held said: "Now that National has stopped tourist flights, Liberty is picking up the slack."

They have tourists waiting in line over there. Maybe the pilot was rushing back for more customers and coming in to land too fast."

Indeed, Liberty spokesman Patrick Day said business booms during Christmas week, but he blamed the crash on "probably a strong gust of wind."

"It was a one in a million shot," said Day. He called the crash "a fender bender."

EASTSIDE RESIDENT

January 7 - January 13, 1998

news



Joy Held, president of the helicopter noise coalition

and downplayed its magnitude, saying it didn't even warrant follow-up news stories. "No one got hurt, so there wasn't much to tell."

Day said pilots must have logged 2,000 of hours air time to be hired, and in fact, most Liberty pilots have accrued more than 4,500 miles.

"These guys are pros," said Day, adding that many Liberty pilots are or have been in the military. "They have extensive training — most have airport transport licenses."

Crosswind landings are part of the prescribed training for obtaining a commercial pilot's license, as are study of meteorology and evaluation of weather conditions.

Day said the pilot involved in last week's crash was a civilian with 10 years flying experience. "There were very gusty winds that day," he said, adding that the crash was a first for the company, which runs charters and sightseeing flights.

HNC p384

# CHOPPERS FACE EXTINCTION IN BOARD PLAN TO EXPAND PARK SPACE

It has been associated with a helicopter crash and the ongoing fight to ban all non-emergency helicopter flights over Manhattan.

But if a recent community board resolution snowballs, the East 60th Street heliport may eventually be known for its green grass, trees, and boardwalk.

Community leaders hope that once the helicopters fly away, the property from the end of the esplanade beyond

the Pavilion Park to the 59th Street Bridge, will be set aside for a new Upper East Side park.

"This is rare and unique opportunity to have this land and serve the public need for open space," said Laura Mayer of Community Board 8. "We have the highest density population in the city and the lowest amount of parkland."

Excluding Central Park, Community Board 8 said it only has about 18 acres of usable land. It is also one of the few waterfront areas not already built on.

Mayer, who was instrumental in the revitalization of Carl Schurz Park, hopes the city will support Community Board 8's resolution. "We hope they take us up on this offer instead of tying the heliport up in real estate deals."

The Economic Development Corporation, which owns the E. 60th Street heliport, has not yet given a response on the proposal.

A fatal crash of a company helicopter owned by Colgate-Palmolive at the heliport last April pushed the EDC to close the port by the end of 1997.

The heliport is still open, however,



much to the annoyance of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York, which is considering a lawsuit to force the city to finally close it.

The resolution also seeks to make the

space under the Pavilion Park and a nearby warehouse available to city agencies who have no place to store equipment.

—Jayson Carcione



Transforming East 60th Street Heliport, p. 6

# OUR TOWN

## *Letters to the Editor*

### CHOPPER SQUABBLE

To the Editor:

Thank you for including the helicopter problem in your yearly review ("East Side Year In Review - Helicopter Row Still Flies," 12/31/97).

It is the city that owns the East 60th Street and East 34th Street heliports (as well as the Downtown heliport at Wall Street and the East River) and American Port services that manages both these sites. The Economic Development Corporation neither owns nor operates heliports.

The recent helicopter crash at the West 30th Street heliport (a state-owned facility) New Year's Eve gives added urgency to community efforts to ban non-emergency helicopter traffic here. Despite mayoral promises last April to close the East 60th Street heliport and decrease city helicopter traffic 40 percent, that heliport remains open and helicopters continue unabated to disturb and endanger city residents, workers and visitors alike.

*Joy A. Held, President  
Helicopter Noise Coalition  
of New York*

HNC p386

## POST TV PLUS

# Ch. 4's new airborne arsenal

Station ups the ante in NY's chopper wars

By MICHAEL STARR

NEW York's TV station chopper wars moved to a whole new level yesterday when WNBC's Ch. 4 unveiled the newest edition of "Chopper 4."

Station officials boasted that their new aircraft is faster, bigger, quieter and better equipped than any other airborne news-gathering apparatus currently playing the skies over New York. They wouldn't reveal how much they paid for the new chopper — a twin-engine EC135 Eurocopter outfitted with a host of ultramodern news-gathering features that took four months to build — but a knowledgeable source estimated it cost between \$3 million and \$4 million.

Ch. 4 has been using variations of "Chopper 4" since April 1995, when it became the first local station to bring airborne news-gathering back to New York after an absence of several years. Since then, channels 2, 7 and 5 have all obtained their own helicopters. Among the new chopper's high-tech features:

■ Flight speeds of up to 172



Ch. 4 execs yesterday proudly unveiled the station's new "Chopper 4," a high-tech helicopter.

miles per hour.

■ A GyroCam 36X digital camera with 900 lines of resolution.  
■ An SX5 Starburst search light, which produces a 15 million candle-power peak beam of light and can be controlled by reporters or the chopper's pilot for use in darkness. Chopper 4 is the only chopper in the New York market with this type of technology.  
■ Six on-board color cameras, a

videotape recorder and two microphone wave switchers.

■ Skywatch Radar, which alerts Chopper 4, visually and audibly, to other aircraft within a certain radius.  
■ Room for 200 pounds of camera and news-gathering equipment.  
■ A FADEC flight computer management system that manages basic operations of the chopper such as the enclosed tail rotor and

electrical and hydraulic systems. The squat, dark blue aircraft sports the NBC logo on its tail rotor, which is enclosed — making the helicopter 50 percent quieter than Ch. 4's previous chopper.

"Chopper 4 has become the most technologically advanced news helicopter in the world," said Ken Sanborn, president of Aerial Films of Morristown, N.J., the company that built the new Chopper 4.

## TV TICKET

### Katie's absence

Katie Couric will host the "Today Show" at least the rest of the week, NBC said yesterday.

Couric is grieving the death of her husband and NBC legal analyst, 42, who died last weekend after a battle with cancer.

Ann Curry will co-host "Today" this week, Matt Lauer.

An NBC spokeswoman says Monahan's private funeral will be held this week.

— Mich

### 'Party' on Life!

Lifetime Television is airing repeats of Fox's "Party of Five" in September.

The network announced yesterday that it has purchased the rights to the first four seasons, and "Party of Five" in a day to be determined.

"Party of Five" — a melodrama encompassing San Francisco families orphaned when their parents were killed by a driver. It stars Matt Dillon, Scott Wolf, Neve Campbell, and Love Hewitt.

"Party of Five" currently airs on Fox.

WNYW/Ch. 52

## 'Virtual Bill': MTV's computer-generated

By MICHAEL STARR

# The Metro Section

The New York Times

THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 1998

B 8

## WNBC Gets Quieter Copter

The television news operation of WNBC, Channel 4, said this week that it had leased a new helicopter designed, in part, to address the noise complaints of many New York residents.

The large television stations in New York are locked in a competition over helicopters, which are heavily touted in their on-air promotions as news-gathering tools. But a growing number of neighborhood groups criticize operators of helicopters, including television stations, for increasing levels of noise over residential areas. Paula Walker Madison, WNBC's vice president for news, said the station was sensitive to

neighborhood concerns and that the new helicopter is faster, safer and "about as close to silent as a helicopter can get."

The \$4 million helicopter, an EC135, has a noise level of about 81.6 decibels. That compares to 87.5 for the previous helicopter, an Astar 350, which costs \$1.5 million, according to Aerial Films Inc., which leased both helicopters to WNBC. Both helicopters are made by American Eurocopter of Dallas.

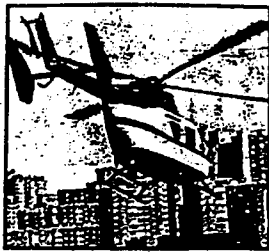
Ken Sanborn, president of Aerial Films in Morristown, N.J., said the new copter has an enclosed tail rotor, which greatly reduces noise and prevents birds and other foreign objects from disrupting the rotor.

But some neighborhood groups are still not impressed. Joy Held, founder of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City, which has helped organize protests over helicopter noise, said that prolonged exposure to noise above 80 decibels could still induce hearing loss.

ANTHONY RAMIREZ

HNC P 388





## Copters

City Wins Right to Restrict  
Helicopter Flights  
Page 6

February 20-26, 1998

# RESIDENT<sup>®</sup>

## news

### Matter of Time

*Court Says City Can Regulate When, Not Where, Helicopters Can Fly; Appeal is Likely* by Leo Jakobson

**A** federal court ruled Wednesday the city has the right to restrict flight operations at the heliports it owns.

The lawsuit, which pitted the city against the holders of fran-

was a mixed one, East Side Councilman Andrew Eristoff said he was "very pleased" with the ruling.

"The city can regulate most aspects of heliports," Eristoff said. "The court said the city, as land-

lord, has the right to say when the heliports can be used."

Thus, he said, the city can restrict late night flights, phase out all flights on weekends, and order a 47 percent reduction in the number of weekday flights.

Eristoff said he was troubled by the court's ruling that the city cannot restrict the helicopters to flying over the rivers

instead of land. The court also refused the city the right to restrict certain types of helicopters, including a particularly noisy Sikorsky model, and to make the heliport owners paint large identifying numbers on the bottom of the whirlybirds.

There are currently heliports on

East 34th Street, West 30th Street, East 60th Street and near Wall Street. All are on city-owned land.

The case will likely be appealed, so no immediate impact is likely.

"People have no peace," said Joy Held, president of the New York City Helicopter Noise Coalition. "I think it makes sense for municipalities to have control of this issue because the FAA certainly isn't doing anything to relieve the problems."

The coalition, which pushed the city to impose the restrictions ordered by this week's ruling, focuses on noise from passing helicopters, as well as exhaust fumes and safety. Sightseeing helicopters, which fly over parts of the city as often as every few minutes, are far more troubling than commuter or news flights. "But a helicopter is a helicopter," Held said.

"It sounds like a step in the right direction for our community," agreed Pam Frederick, chair of Community Board 4, which gets a lot of complaints from residents about the noise from helicopters. "People on the [Hudson] River are most plagued by this."

A spokesman from Liberty Helicopter, which runs the West 34th Street heliport, did not return a call for comment at press time.



A federal court ruled this week to allow the city to restrict late-night helicopter flights, phase out weekend flights and halve the number of weekday flights. The city may not however restrict choppers to flying over the rivers instead of land.

chises to run heliports on city-owned land, was to determine if the city had the right to say when those flights could be made, and over what part of the city they could fly. Previously, only the Federal Aviation Administration could regulate helicopters.

While admitting the city's victory

HNC p 389

The New York Times Magazine

FEBRUARY 22, 1998

# Calling All Noisebusters

What the city really needs is a posse of sonic bounty hunters. A poster animal wouldn't hurt, either.

**I**N THE PAST, I'VE ADVOCATED VIGILANTISM (read "eggs") as the best weapon against car alarms and other noise pollution, but clearly this strategy isn't working. While crime has dropped, noise complaints to the city have risen sharply. Noise is easily the most common quality-of-life lament. City officials have recently increased the fines for noise polluters, but the new penalties aren't likely to do much good, either. Anti-noise zealots require better weapons. We must unleash the three most powerful social forces on the planet today: capitalism, environmentalism and the determination of New York parents to get their children into the right schools.

The first step is to turn street noise into money. The city's honking horns, unmuffled motorcycles and booming stereos represent a vast mother lode waiting to be mined. On any given day, it's probably safe to assume that 10 percent of the 2.5 million motorists in New York City honk their horns, which is illegal unless there's an emergency. If each of the 250,000 honkers merely paid the minimum fine, \$220, the city would reap more than \$50 million. Add in the stiffer fines for repeat offenders (serial honkers can be fined as much as \$2,625), plus the revenue from the many other noise infractions, and the city could gross \$100 million a day, more than it collects through all its taxes.

But this potential gold mine has been entrusted to the police, who have no particular incentive to work it. They'd rather worry about the offenses that show up as crime statistics. Most precinct houses, as *The Daily News* recently revealed, don't even have sound-measuring meters. On a typical day, police throughout the city issue a grand total of *four* summonses for noise.

"Since the police refuse to give summonses, we should have the equivalent of meter maids for noise," says Arline Bronzaft, a member of the Mayor's Council on the Environment and a prominent researcher on the health effects of noise. "We should have specialists going around the streets looking for violations, and maybe a special noise court like the special court for traffic viola-

tions." These noisebusters could work out of a city agency, although it would be more efficient to contract out the enforcement. The city might even deputize individual entrepreneurs: sonic bounty hunters. Some of us devoted cranks would be glad to do the job for nothing.

Noise-abatement needs to be not only profitable but also ecologically fashionable. Noise is by far the most pervasive environmental hazard in urban areas, a pollutant linked to hearing loss, sleep deprivation and rises in blood pressure, cholesterol and stress hormones. Yet it gets no respect. New York forbids you to smoke even in a privately owned restaurant with no one nearby, but in public space you're free to disturb the peace of thousands of New Yorkers with helicopters, sirens, car alarms and radios. Car alarms are not only legal but also subsidized because of a state law forcing insurance companies to give discounts for these devices (even though the companies question their effectiveness). Environmental groups often fret about minuscule traces of air pollutants and toxic wastes that haven't been demonstrated to cause widespread health problems, but they have generally ignored the well-documented impacts of noise.

Environmentalists have, however, crusaded against one form of noise pollution: man-made noise in the ocean suspected of disturbing whales and dolphins. Therein lies a crucial lesson in marketing eco-menaces: We need a poster animal. The only urban animals thus far scientifically proven to suffer from noise are rats and mice, which have fatal seizures when exposed to loud sounds. These animals, unfortunately, do not make ideal victims. No one will weep if street noise decimates the rat population. But if we could demonstrate that a more beloved rodent is endangered, the Federal Government might force the city to take action. The best strategy would be to focus on a mediagenic rodent — the squirrel, ideally a bushy-tailed Central Park denizen whose life has been shattered by boom boxes.

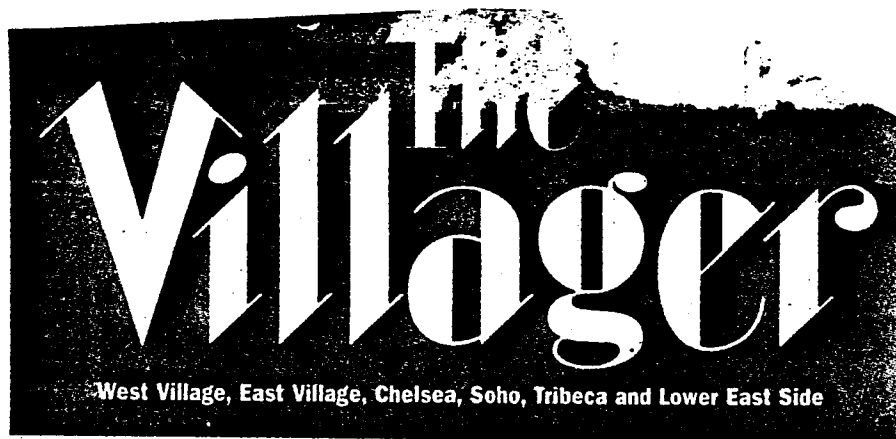
If the squirrel's plight isn't sufficiently alarming, one sure-fire weapon remains: parental angst.



This could be aroused by publicizing research on noise and learning disability, especially the classic studies done among New York children exposed to din from cars, trains and airplanes. In the high-rise apartment buildings straddling the Manhattan approach to the George Washington Bridge, the children living on the lower floors scored worse on reading tests than did the children above them. At an elementary school next to elevated train tracks in Inwood, the average reading level of sixth graders on the noisy side of the school was a full year behind the students on the quiet side; later, after acoustic engineers muffled the train noise, the reading scores on both sides of the school were the same.

"Most people don't take noise seriously because they think you can just get used to it," says Gary Evans, an environmental psychologist at Cornell University who has found that schoolchildren near airports suffer from reading deficiencies and impaired long-term memory. "On the surface, kids exposed to chronic noise do seem to adapt by tuning it out. But they pay a price because they become conditioned to tune out other stimuli too."

For New York's ambitious parents, the implications of this research seem clear: either move to a quiet suburb or do something about the city's clamor. No matter how much scheming they do to get into the right public school, no matter how much they spend on private-school tuition, their children's SAT scores are endangered every time a cabbie honks. The war against noise will be won the day a New York lawyer whose child is rejected by Harvard wins a class-action suit against a helicopter company — or even better, collects hefty damages from a neighbor with a car alarm. Until that happy day though, I continue to recommend eggs. ■



**February 25, 1998**

**p. 3**

## **Revised waterfront bill ready**

A new draft of the Hudson River Park legislation could be introduced in Albany as soon as early March. Auguring well for the bill's passage, Assemblymember Deborah Glick, whose support will be critical, appears much more favorable to this version of the bill than the previous one.

The new version incorporates suggestions made by Community Boards 1, 2, 4 and 7, regarding the proposed park between Battery Park City and 59th St., including:

- \* Three community representatives -- one each from Community Boards 1, 2 and 4 -- will be to the board of directors of the new Hudson River Park Trust, which is to oversee building and maintenance of the proposed park. Both the Mayor and the Governor would have veto power over the authority's actions.

- \* Ownership of the park won't be turned over to the new authority, but would remain with the city and state, with the state Parks Department owning the land below 35th St. the city Parks Department owning the park area above that.

- \* Piers 40 and 76 have been put into a special category requiring 80 percent park use, but permitting up to 100 percent park use.

- \* Heliports and transportation to gambling vessels has been added to the list of prohibited uses in the park.

- \* A deadline of Dec. 31, 2003 has been set for the removal of incompatible government uses from the park, including the sanitation facility on Gansevoort Peninsula and bus garage on Pier 57.

In an interview, Glick said problems with the new version during the legislative process.

"I think there have been some positive changes," Glick said. "I'm glad we didn't jump at the first version, which had serious deficiencies. I still have concerns about the authority issue and the SEQRA issue. My overall impression, is that we are optimistic that we can move forward, but obviously there are changes that need to be made." Community Board 2 will hold a public hearing on the revised draft on March, at 75 Morton St. at 6:30 p.m.

HNC p 391

# The Main Street **WIRE**

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

March 1998

In association with

## No More Helicopters What's That Quiet?

by Nancy Cruickshank

This year March came in like a lamb on Roosevelt Island. It was the first Sunday afternoon in the history of residential development without helicopters coming and going from the 60th Street heliport. The last flight roared out on Saturday, February 28th with its closing.

The heliport, opened in the 1960's to replace the one atop the Pan Am building after a tragic accident forced its closure, has been the focus of community opposition for years. It is being closed because of structural problems and because of upcoming repair work to be done on the FDR Drive. At the present time there are no plans to reopen it.

Since 1975 the heliport had been operating in violation of the New York City Charter with noise levels on Roosevelt Island exceeding those that cause permanent hearing loss.

Should one worry that Roosevelt Island will be too quiet, we continue to be under the East River helicopter flyway created to ease noise levels in Manhattan. There are also plans to open a helicopter repair facility at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Helicopters will be using the East River to access it.



Website NYC10044

On Monday, standing water on the tarmac was quiet evidence of heliport inactivity. Days before, the puddle would have been dispersed by turbulent air from the blades of transient helicopters.

HNC P392





**February 25, 1998**

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HNC P 392

# OUR TOWN

OUR TOWN • MARCH 4, 1998 • 7

## CURFEW, CLOSURE SLASHES EAST SIDE HELICOPTER TRAFFIC

East Side airspace may be a little quieter now that one heliport is closing and another is reducing its service.

After 25 years in operation, the East 60th Street Heliport, site of a fatal crash last year, closed last Saturday, said Johnson Controls, the operators of the heliport.

Last April, a helicopter owned by Colgate-Palmolive plunged into the East River on takeoff, killing all on board. Mayor Rudolph Giuliani ordered the heliport closed soon after and the accident gave new impetus to ban all non-emergency helicopter traffic in the city.

At the East 34th Street heliport, flights will be slashed by nearly 50 percent and its operating hours reduced due to a recent federal court decision.

The decision will allow the city to implement an 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. curfew on weekdays and a 6 p.m. to 10 a.m. curfew on weekends. It will also reduce the total number of flights by 47 percent, focusing on the elimination of all sight-seeing tours.

The city-owned East 34th Street Heliport is currently leased on a monthly basis to Johnson Controls, which specializes in corporate flights, but the re-

strictions will apply to any future tenant as well, according to Marcus Cederqvist, a spokesperson from Council Member Andrew Eristoff's office.

"Any future operator will have to follow the provisions of the permit," Cederqvist said. "We would like to have seen the heliport closed entirely, but since that wasn't achievable, we went after the reductions."

National Helicopter, the previous operator of the East 34th Street heliport was evicted from the site last year because it owed the city arrears of more than \$700,000.

Although the heliport will be cutting back its service, the decision did not satisfy everyone.

"The court's decision did not go far enough. We should not have to listen to 77 flights a day," said Joy Held, director of the Helicopter Noise Coalition of New York City. "People deserve protection during all of their hours, not just in the evenings."

The coalition has filed a law suit to permanently close the heliport. "These facilities should be shut down," Held said. "Heliports do not belong in residential neighborhoods."

— Jason Schaffer

HWC p 393



# Town & Village

VOL. 51, NO. 12

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, MARCH 5, 1998

## Court keeps copters in air, hands controls over to city

By Geoffrey Williams

Helicopter noise activists and city officials are divided over a federal panel's decision last week that sustained, in part, the city's right to restrict flights on the East Side.

While activists wanted the 34th Street heliport closed altogether, city officials lauded Circuit Court Judge Richard Cardamone's ruling that stopped short of that action, calling it "an important victory for the city and for local governments everywhere."

The New York Federal

Appeals Court decision on February 17 partially reversed an earlier ruling by Judge Sonia Sotomayor that determined only the FAA, not the city, could restrict heliport operations.

In last Tuesday's split opinion, Cardamone ruled that most of the restrictions imposed by the City Council were "reasonable" and "nonarbitrary" -- weekday and weekend curfews, a phase-out of weekend flights and a nearly 50-percent reduction of operations at the facility -- but nixed a ban on large helicopters, flight rerouting and underbelly

marking for identification.

"In allowing the city to enforce some basic restrictions on flight operations, the Appeals Court has reaffirmed the city's fundamental right to manage and control its own property," said City Councilman Andrew Eristoff, whose district includes the city-owned land on which the 34th Street heliport is located.

In May 1996, the Giuliani administration, the City Planning Commission and the City Council imposed restrictions on helicopter overflights, and hours and days of operation, at the 34th

A federal appeals panel has ruled that the city has the right to impose restrictions on helicopter flights over New York, reversing an earlier judge's decision.

Street facility.

In retaliation, the heliport's operator, National Helicopter Corporation, sued the city, challenging the validity

of those restrictions.

In her decision, Sotomayor ruled that the city's proposals for a 47-percent reduction of those restrictions.

Continued on page 19

Continued from page 1

tion in flights, a phase-out of weekend traffic, the barring of large Sikorsky S-58Ts, a required rerouting of flights from Second Avenue to the East River, and the mandatory marking of the underside of helicopters were unreasonable.

Helicopter Noise Coalition President Joy Held, head of the 15,000-strong activist group that has sued the city (along with Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney and Assemblyman Steve Sanders, among others) to close the 34th Street facility, maintains Cardamone's decision is "better than what we had before," but admits restrictions are "not the answer."

"The answer," she said, "is to shut the 34th Street

heliport down."

National was evicted from the heliport last August, when the city charged it was more than \$700,000 in arrears on taxes and back rent. National denied those charges and, in an exclusive with this newspaper, supplied a Price Waterhouse document that seemed to support its claims.

American Port Services, formerly known as Johnson Controls and long-time operator of the 60th Street heliport, took over August 18 for National at 34th Street.

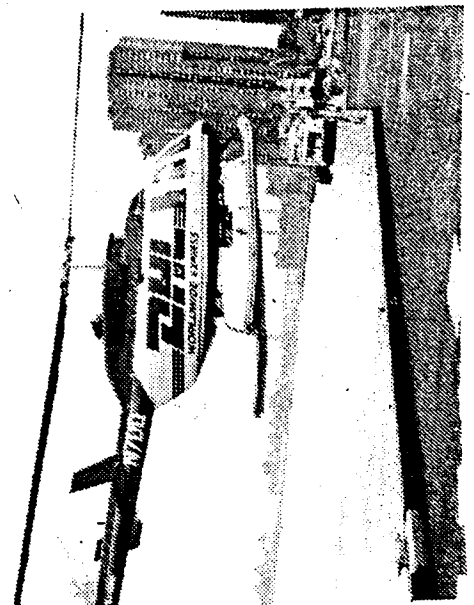
Ironically, officials at American, a primarily corporate helicopter operator, say the latest court decision imposing restrictions at 34th

Street really won't affect their business.

"We don't see this decision as a hindrance," said Patricia Wagner, a senior representative at American. "We complied before it was a requirement."

Because it works mostly with corporate clients, says Wagner, and doesn't have to cater to tourists, American can avoid, as it has for the past 30 years at 60th Street, problems with curfews and flight paths.

According to an agreement with the city, American is scheduled to close down the Upper East Side heliport at the end of business on Saturday, February 28, and work exclusively out of 34th Street.



HWC p394

THE BROOKLYN HEIGHTS PAPER 3/6/98

# Heights Copter complex lifts off

By Alec MacGillis  
The Brooklyn Papers

The proposal for a large helicopter service and storage facility in the Navy Yard is taking off, and residents in Brooklyn Heights and Vinegar Hill are worried that their allies in elected office won't be willing to help shoot it down.

Supersonic Aviation submitted a revised environmental assessment statement for a 66,640 square-foot facility to the Department of City Planning in February, and has won the backing of the Navy Yard's directors.

The city deemed the company's first application inadequate last year, and many thought the proposal had vanished for good until the company hired a leading Manhattan law firm to draw up a new statement a few months ago.

If the planning department certifies the application, it will head into the Uniform Land Use Review Process (ULURP), during which affected communities will have a formal opportunity to voice their concerns.

Some residents in Brooklyn Heights and Vinegar Hill are aggressively fighting the proposal, saying that the facility will bring a fleet of noisy helicopters to the area. They warn that the facility would cancel out the recent successes of the Brooklyn helicopter task force made up of elected officials and residents, which has all but eliminated sightseeing copters over the Brooklyn Bridge and the Promenade.

"It's a horrifying prospect," said task force member Monique Denoncin of Vinegar Hill. "I am worried some people still don't understand what the

consequences would be — it would be going back to the nightmare we had before."

The facility, estimated to cost \$3 million, would offer helicopter repair as well as storage space for up to 18 copters and 8,000 gallons of above-ground fuel — something which the two heliports closest to Brooklyn, at Wall Street and 34th Street, lack.

Consultants hired by the company argue that the facility would actually reduce helicopter traffic over Brooklyn since it would no longer be necessary for helicopters from Manhattan to fly overhead to refuel in Farmingdale, Long Island.

In addition, they say, helicopters that make a drop-off in Manhattan and now have nothing to do but hover over the East River until it's time for their next pick-up would have a place to land for a few hours.

"It will eliminate a lot of flyovers over the East River," said Howard Hornstein, Supersonic Aviation's lawyer, from the firm of Fischbein Badillo Wagner Harding. "It is not a heliport; it's a garage for helicopters."

Nonsense, say facility opponents, who argue that there is a big difference between helicopters flying high overhead to Long Island and ones actually coming to land on a regular basis not far from residential neighborhoods.

In addition, they predict, it will often be necessary for helicopters to hover in the air above the Navy Yard if all of the fueling and storage spots below are taken.

Opponents object to the claim in the application submitted to City Planning that there is no residential zone within a three-

quarter mile radius of the site, which is on the eastern edge of Wallabout Basin.

A study of a Brooklyn map shows that parts of Fort Greene, Williamsburg, and Vinegar Hill — which is on the verge of being switched to a residential zone — are all within that radius.

After the task force met last week with representatives of the company, elected officials on the panel said they wanted to meet at least one more time with the facility backers to ask more questions about the project's positive and negative effects.

"We want to be fair and wait and see," said Karen Johnson, assistant to Heights Rep. Ed Towns. "It's been pitched to us that it would result in fewer overflies, and I don't know if that's the case. Of course we're Nervous Nellies about it, but we have to determine if it's in our best interest and the best interest of those across the river."

This patient approach worries residents like Sheila Susskind of the Heights, who said, "We feel we know enough. We don't know for sure if they feel the way we do."

Denoncin agreed, saying of Towns and other local elected officials, "I have a feeling they don't have as strong a position against it."

One potential benefit cited both by Johnson and by Edward Carter, one of the Navy Yard's directors, is the 30 jobs Supersonic says it will create.

Susskind warns that the facility could have an adverse economic impact on the Navy Yard, if its noise drives away some of the businesses in the Yard, which now employ about 2,500 people.

Carter dismissed this possibility, saying that any businesses that left citing the facility would simply be covering up the fact that they aren't succeeding.

"If they start to talk about

pulling out, they have other reasons," he said. "Talking about the noise would be a smoke-screen. It will enhance employment without causing environmental dysfunction."



*Is that Marine One? Rite Aid Corp.'s top exec continues to fly in the face of community opposition.*

## SOCIETY

**Flygate: Executive Privilege or Noisy Nuisance?**

**T**O MARTIN GRASS, CHAIRMAN OF THE RITE AID Corp., commuting by helicopter from his \$2 million Maryland estate to his Harrisburg, Pa., office is the prerogative of a busy executive. But many of his neighbors in the rural Green Spring Valley north of Baltimore complain that the racket from Grass's \$3.5 million, Italian-made chopper rattles windows, scares kids and animals, and has even caused a nearby farmer's chickens to stop laying eggs. Worse, they charge, it violates the county's strict zoning code. Repeated orders by county officials to cease flying and citations carrying \$6,000 in fines have not

grounded Grass. For his part, the Rite Aid chief told NEWSWEEK, he's entitled to use his current helipad on a neighbor's farm because it was once an airstrip, decades before the present zoning laws were written. He says he tired of his 90-minute commute by stretch limo and bought the chopper to slice the ride to 20 minutes. "He can't move into a community, threaten the very essence of it and not expect us to fight back," contends local farmer Deirdre Smith. "That's what we're doing." At the weekend, state officials hoping to avert a nasty legal battle suggested alternative state-owned landing sites nearby.

Newsweek March 9, 1998

HWC p 396

# The New York Times

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NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 1998

\$1 beyond the greater New Y

## Vigilant Eyes Fill Skies Over Los Angeles

By TODD S. PURDUM

LOS ANGELES, March 17 — When the sun sinks over the Pacific and the freeways fill with cars, when the nightly newscasts start and the bad guys begin to cruise, the big birds rise — two, three, five, a dozen helicopters hovering in the California twilight, trolling for trouble, ready to televise it live.

On balmy evenings, when windows are open, the copters' thrumming rotors fill the air with crisscrossing crackles, like the opening credits of "M.A.S.H." Their 30 million-candlepower searchlights strafe the bedroom windows of unsuspecting civilians suddenly caught up in police efforts to catch a thief or news crews' efforts to capture the catch.

A juicy freeway police pursuit can fill up a whole local newscast — even pre-empt half the network news, as one did to Tom Brokaw of NBC two weeks ago. A bar in Hermosa Beach recently offered "Happy hour prices during all car chases," and the helicopter is such a civic icon that the city's Metropolitan Transportation Authority includes a stylized sketch of one among a handful of images that decorate its bus transfers.



Tyrone Turner for The New York Times

Officer Ken Phillipe of the Los Angeles Police Department's air support division, trying to follow a car chase last week.

"It's definitely the premier helicopter market in the country," said Larry Perret, the news director of KCBS-TV, the local CBS affiliate, which, like almost every other station in town, operates its own helicopter at a cost approaching \$1 million a year. "The reason is simple: geography. The massive area creates all sorts of logistical problems in terms of coverage of breaking news."

Los Angeles County, at 4,000

square miles, is roughly four-fifths the size of Connecticut, and the same challenge applies to law enforcement, fire and other emergency services. The Los Angeles Police Department has 16 patrol helicopters and one transport, the largest municipal fleet in the world, while the New York City Police Department has 6. ("We're high instead of wide," explained a

Continued on Page A14

Cont.

HWC P 397

# The Metro Section

The New York Times

B1

SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 1998

## Disney Can Use Park Meadow Closed to Public

By JAMES BARRON

Sheep Meadow, the rolling brilliant-green lawn in Central Park, may be closed to lollers, loungers and people-watchers from late fall to mid-April each year, but a \$105,000 fee has opened it to the Walt Disney Company tomorrow for a commercial it plans to film there.

City officials said yesterday that the Walt Disney Company would use half of the 14-acre Sheep Meadow between 10 A.M. and 1 P.M. for a promotion for a theme park in Florida.

The officials said that Disney planned to have 1,200 children stand in formation, spelling out the name of the theme park, Disney's Animal Kingdom. The scene will be filmed from helicopters and from ground-level cameras set up outside Sheep Meadow, which is in the mid-60's, just east of Tavern on the Green and west of the Mall.

But advocates for the park criticized the deal, saying that the fee was too low and that the city was showing preference to a large corporation that offered to pay money to go where the public could not.

Parks Department officials maintained that parkgoers out for a stroll tomorrow, on what is expected to be a warm and sunny Sunday, should not have expected to stroll in Sheep Meadow — it would have been closed, and still will be to everybody but the 1,200 children.

Following the advice of Frederick Law Olmsted, the 19th-century landscape architect who created the park with Calvert

*Continued on Page B4*

cont.

HNC p 400

# Disney Buys Access to a Central Park Meadow That Is Closed to the Public

*Continued From Page B1*

Vaux, the Parks Department waits to reopen Sheep Meadow until mid-April every year, no matter how warm March has been. To give Sheep Meadow time to recover from the previous season, the Parks Department holds off until horticulturists have confirmed that the grass is once again strong enough to withstand the herds of people who crowd in — 30,000 on a typical day.

Letting in people before the grass is ready risks damaging the sod, officials said.

But letting in a throng of youngsters for three hours for a filming poses no such risks, Parks Department officials said. "These are 1,200 very light children with little feet and

sneakers," said Parks Commissioner Henry J. Stern. "On a normal day's use, there would be grown-ups with big feet."

Mr. Stern called the \$105,000 a "donation" and said that it would be made over three years. He said that it would pay for the Urban Park Ranger program.

He said that the city had negotiated a 10-page permit that provides for a \$20,000 security deposit that makes Disney responsible for any damage to the grass. He said the city also has the right to cancel the permit in case of rain, which would soften the sod and increase the chance of damage to the grass.

But City Councilman Thomas K. Duane complained that the city was jeopardizing the jewel of the park for quick money — and not enough mon-

ey, at that.

"In the scheme of what New York City parks need to bring them up to a decent level of maintenance," he said, "this is a drop in the bucket from a corporation that could really kick in a lot more. And they are letting people use a public park before it's scheduled to be open, so if the park is going to be open for private use, the park should be open for public use."

Mr. Stern countered that the price was "generous for three hours' use of half the lawn in Sheep Meadow." The Parks Department has let corporations use parts of Central Park before — Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani said in 1995 that Disney had agreed to give New York \$1 million for the use of Central Park to show the film "Pocahontas" — but it was not clear

what Sheep Meadow has cost for other publicity-generating events.

In 1992, a consortium of cheese producers pledged to finance the maintenance of Sheep Meadow for 1993 after they brought a flock of sheep to graze on the meadow, as the animals did from the 1860's to the 1930's. In those days, a shepherd lived where Tavern on the Green now stands.

Mr. Stern also defended the Disney filming for sending a positive image of the city to the world. "It is very valuable publicity for the park," Mr. Stern said. "It shows the world that Central Park is back and terrific. Even when a theme park opens in Florida, they announce it in New York."

Mr. Stern said that Disney had originally wanted to do the filming at

57th Street and Madison Avenue, but changed locations because the aerial shots would not have been good enough. "This is not a favor to Disney," Mr. Stern said, "this is something that's mutually beneficial."

Marcia Reiss of the Parks Council, a nonprofit group that monitors the 834-acre urban greensward, told The Associated Press that she was concerned that a corporate sponsor could use a part of the park that was off-limits to the public.

"I think there is a place for corporate sponsorship and activities if it makes it possible for more people to enjoy and use the park," she said. But the Disney filming "was not an event people can enjoy."

Until the 1980's, Sheep Meadow was the site of everything from symphonic performances to operas to

political rallies. In 1911, 10,000 schoolgirls danced in a folk dancing tournament; in 1912, an event called "Around the World in Search of Fairyland" featured children in brightly colored costumes.

But by the late 1970's, Sheep Meadow was often more brown than green, worn out by the crowds.

Sheep Meadow was resodded in 1980. In struggling to keep it green, the Parks Department was following Olmsted's lead; he had argued against the intrusion of much organized activity into the park. To Olmsted, the park was a pastoral experience, a quiet retreat from other tensions, and the meaning of that experience was diminished if the park became a place of athletic contests, musical events and huge crowds attending organized festivals.

# The New York Times

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NEW YORK, MONDAY, MARCH 30, 1998

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## National News Briefs

A14

### *In Shift, Army and Guard Ground Huey Copters*

BOSTON, March 29 (AP) — Despite declaring their fleets of UH-1 Huey helicopters safe to fly as recently as last week, the Army and National Guard have now decided to ground the helicopters, which have an unexplained history of potentially catastrophic mechanical problems.

Since November, the military has restricted the operation of the helicopters, which date to the Vietnam era. Although flights in clouds and over water were barred, the Hueys were declared generally safe to fly. But on Friday, military officials changed their minds.

The engines in the helicopters are to be checked for excessive vibrations. Gearbox problems in the Hueys were blamed for some near disasters last year. Pilots reported that the engines would speed up while gauges dropped to zero.

The National Guard uses most of the 907 Huey helicopters that are expected to be grounded, for six months to two years.

An Army spokesman, Bob Hunt, said the National Guard had about 400 newer UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters to offset the impact of grounding the Hueys, which went out of production in the mid-1970's.

HNC p 402

# New York loses a heliport as anti-noise forces score a victory

by Bill Westfall

Besieged New York area helicopter operators suffered a major setback in early March as the city government padlocked the East 60th Street Heliport, shutting that facility down, evidently for keeps. Closed after 30 years of continuous operation in the city, the heliport had been targeted as a source of unwanted noise by the residents of a nearby Roosevelt Island apartment complex for nearly that long.

As March passed, American Port Services, formerly known as Johnson

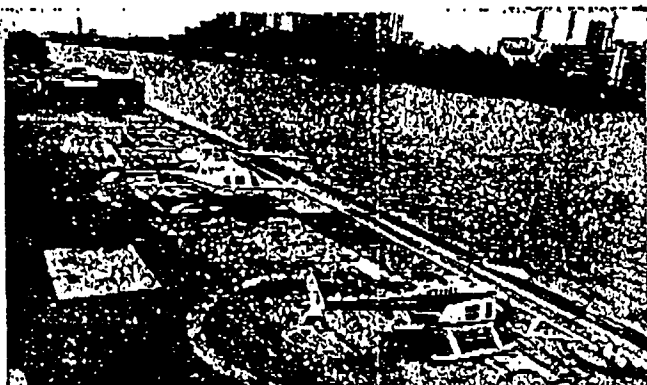
Noise Coalition, whose chairman, Joy Hold, has pledged that organization, now establishing spinoff chapters throughout New York's boroughs, to nothing less than the total eradication of corporate, sightseeing, electronic news-gathering and traffic-watch rotorcraft in New York City airspace.

"These people are effective, committed and they have powerful friends," warned Zaccaro. "Their first victory has been a major one."

While officially closed to helicopter traffic, the East 60th Street site continued to sell fuel to a few select

made revenue from landing fees. As leading tenant, National was also the most active user of the heliport, transporting some 130,000 sightseers per year. For a few weeks following its eviction, National tried to resurrect what had been a \$12 million per year sightseeing business, at first by trying to continue operations out of East 34th Street but hamstrung by the fact that under the terms of the eviction, it had no access to the waiting-room trailers that had been its headquarters at East 34th. National tried to make do by busing passengers to the Wall Street Heliport, but a

Long a battlefield between New York's pro- and anti-heliport forces, the East 60th Street Heliport offers easy access to midtown Manhattan. Its popularity with helicopter operators was proportional to the consternation those operators caused the high-rise residents of nearby Roosevelt Island. The heliport last year of a Colgate Palmolive BK 117 did little to enhance the facility's image and finally, after 30 years, the vest-pocket heliport was closed.



## BOTH BOSTON PUBLIC HELIPORTS FACE CLOSURE

Boston's only two public-use heliports are both facing imminent closure. The Nashua Street heliport, a ground level facility located at the end of Charles Street on Boston Harbor near North Station, is the property of the city's Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) and has been earmarked for conversion to a city park. Work is set to begin this summer. Really more a heliport than a heliport, Nashua Street sold no fuel and did not allow transient helicopter parking. An uncontrolled facility, Nashua Street kept no figures on total annual movements but traffic was evidently not enough for the MDC.

Boston City Heliport is a full service facility with fuel, located in a wharf area on the side of the Charles River opposite Logan Airport. The location is considered by local developers to be so prime that they're planning to build Boston's new convention center on it. "Losing this facility is really a shame," said Thomas Grassia, president of the New England Helicopter Pilots Association. "It's in a good location, with no noise problems around it and no problems with the neighbors. There's fuel for sale and it's only five to eight minutes from there to the corporate airfields or Route 128 corporations. It's purely a problem with the real estate being worth more than what's happening on it." Closure of the site is set for year's end. Meanwhile, alternate site studies are under way.

—B.W.

Controls and operator of both East 60th Street and East 34th Street Heliports, began to move its offices from the East 60th Street site to East 34th. "It was sad to record our last official commercial landing on February 28," said manager Pat Wagner. The last helicopter out was a JetRanger belonging to Schiavone Aircraft. Longtime New York heliport veteran Chip Harper was at the controls. "The closing of East 60th and the move to East 34th Street has left a lot of us wondering 'How could this happen?'" said Wagner.

"It happened largely through complacency and because the forces opposing helicopters in New York are stronger, more powerful and better organized than ever before," warned Matt Zaccaro, special counsel to the Eastern Region Helicopter Council (ERHC) as well as head of that group's public relations effort. Leading the charge has been the New York

stop-and-go customers through March, "just to empty our tanks to they can be closed down," Wagner said. Meanwhile, efforts to make operational a defunct fuel farm at the East 34th Street Heliport proceeded, with late April as the target startup date.

APS was designated the new operator of East 34th Street by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani after long-time combination tenant and landlord National Helicopter was evicted for alleged non-payment of rent last summer. (National ran the heliport as lease-designated landlord under an agreement with the City of New York. As landlord, the Garden City, N.Y.-based operator also sold fuel and

lack of suitable passenger-waiting facilities at that site and the bank's subsequent seizure of most of National's helicopter fleet combined to drive the company to its knees. According to accounts, National has filed for Chapter Seven bankruptcy and its assets are being dispersed among its many creditors.

The East 34th Street Heliport, close as it is to a number of major East Side hospitals as well as some upper-crust Manhattan residential neighborhoods, has long been the scene of battles between pro- and anti-helicopter forces. When National's sightseeing operations ceased last summer, anti-helicopter forces in the neighborhood rejoiced. Admittedly, 34th Street continued to handle its share of New York's helicopter traffic, but nothing like the volume National's sightseers had generated.

## TROUBLE IN RIVER CITY

There are 148,000 takeoffs and landings from the city's heliports every year, said Karen Johnson, assistant to 10th New York District Congressman Ed Towne, "and believe me, there's a citizen's group somewhere that monitors every one of them." The 10th District covers most of the Brooklyn waterfront facing New York Harbor, including the high-rent Promenade section, an upscale area that's home to many of New York's most prestigious citizens, including author Norman Mailer. It is a designated "no fly" zone for rotorcraft. Johnson recently addressed a meeting of the Eastern Region Helicopter Council (ERHC), whose president, Dick Outson, cited her and her boss as one of the forces of reason and moderation in the New York helicopter wars. While gratefully accepting her role as a friend of vertical flight, Johnson cautioned the ERHC membership about the dangers threatening their livelihoods.

"Not all the people who oppose helicopter operations over the city are wild-eyed radicals. Many of our constituents are rational, responsible people who have invested in their neighborhoods and homes and see the helicopter noise as a threat to that investment. When small-package delivery-service helicopters sit on the pad at Wall Street, idling just a few hundred feet from the Promenade in the summer when those houses have their windows open, yes, that's helicopter noise. Or when one of the traffic helicopters from TV or radio hovers over an accident on the Brooklyn Bridge for an hour starting at 7 a.m., that's excessive helicopter noise. And that's what a lot of these people are complaining about. News helicopters love to hover. Especially Channel Four." [In the New York area, that's WNBC, the local network flagship station, which recently began operations using a new Eurocopter EC 135.—Ed.]

On behalf of her boss, Johnson pledged continued support for New York City helicopter operations but warned that such support would not be nearly enough in the face of growing opposition. Her misgivings were echoed by ERHC president Outson. "We're in for a rough ride in the next few months. The city has closed down East 60th Street just as the city's Economic Development Commission is readying a master plan covering the helicopter's role in the transportation network of the city. We hope that isn't an indication of things to come."

—B.W.

"Now that East 60th has closed, much of its traffic has come down to East 34th," said Zaccaro. "More of that traffic is corporate, and more of it up-grades during business hours than before, but the point is made: there's a lot of demand for helicopter access to Manhattan and they're going to operate anywhere they can."

Under present agreements, East 34th Street Heliport's ramp plan has been modified to allow five landing sites, four of them on deck surface sufficiently strong to support helicopters up to the S-76 class and one intended to accommodate a slightly smaller aircraft such as a Bell JetRanger or BK 117. Hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays, and noon to 8 p.m. on Sundays.

All of which is subject to change. According to a February ruling (New York Helicopter Corp vs City of New York; Case Nos. 97-7082 and 97-7142) by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, the New York City government may impose nighttime curfews, order a phase out of weekend activities, and/or require up

to a 47-percent reduction in overall operations at the 34th Street site. But the ruling was not entirely against the interests of helicopter operators. That same ruling also held that the city's prohibition of the use of Sikorsky S-58Ts (or below of similar size and weight) for sightseeing constituted unfair discrimination. The city's restrictions on sightseeing routes and a requirement that helicopters using the heliport be marked for identification from the ground were rejected by the court as contrary to the federal government's legislated exclusive control of airspace management.

Preparing for a continuing upswing in traffic volume, Air Pegasus, operator of the West 34th Street Heliport, has begun the process of obtaining a barge it plans to tie up alongside the facility. The barge would add a trio of hot spots to the vest-pocket waterfront facility, where the city is landlocked. In that role, the city is exercising its right of eminent domain by excavating for and working on a large valve that's part of a major sewer line that runs directly under the West 30th Street deck.

## 1997 DELIVERIES OF NEW CIVIL HELICOPTERS WORLDWIDE

	AMERICA	BELL	DOUGLAS	CHRYSLER	EUROCOPTER	PIRELLA	BOEING	BRONKOV
Piston				F28F (3) 280FX (2)		R22 (132) R44 (114)	BOC (15) BOCB (15)	
Single Turbine		806B (38) 206L (17) 407 (140)	MD 500 (14) MD 500M (15)	480 (7)	AS 350 (56) EC 120 (1)		230 (5)	
Light Twin Turbine	A100 (17)		MD 500 (1)		AS 355 (31) BO 105 (7) EC 135 (28)			
Medium Twin Turbine	B124/12 (11) 212 (1) 320 (4) 412 (38) 430 (10)				AS 365 (24) BK 117 (8)			5-76 (18)
Heavy Twin Turbine					AS 532P (14)			
TOTALS	22	848	00	12	211	540	00	18

\*Not confirmed. Actual figures may vary slightly.

HNC P 403



# The New York Times

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NEW YORK, THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 1998

\$1 beyond the greater New York m

Page 10

## World News Briefs

### *Mexico Grounds Copters Donated by U.S.*

MEXICO CITY, April 1 (Agence France-Presse) — The Mexican De-

fense Ministry has grounded 72 UH-1H Huey helicopters donated by the United States for the war on drugs because of technical problems.

The Vietnam-era helicopters will "remain on the ground until the origin of accident-causing technical faults is determined," the ministry said in a statement issued late on Tuesday. Meanwhile, it said the war on drugs would continue with the "intensive use of aviation material belonging to the Mexican Government."

The Mexican Government's decision followed a similar move to ground all UH-1H copters announced Monday by the United States Army. The Army's aging fleet of 907 Hueys were being inspected for an engine defect and excessive vibration.

HNC p 404

# THE WESTSIDER

EDITORIAL

APRIL 9-15, 1998

## Helicopters vs. Handbills

It is surprising that with Mayor Giuliani's ever-inclusive, ever-expanding quality-of-life campaign, the city is talking about opening up yet another heliport.

The buzzing and vibrations of helicopters has in the last couple of years inspired the creation of citywide task forces and coalitions. The brigade of a campaign to free the city skies of all helicopter flights almost entirely, with the exception of emergencies, a.k.a. the Helicopter Noise Coalition, now bursts to a purported 15,000 members.

A small army of New Yorkers are unhappy and making their own noise about helicopters. A couple of years ago, some Manhattan residents complained, and their then-borough president, Ruth Messinger, and her helicopter noise task force, lobbied to restrict over-flights across the island to Central Park. Then residents living on either side of the park got upset.

This game of musical over-flights is not solving the problem. And the talk by the city's Economic Development Corporation of opening a heliport potentially just a few blocks from the already-operating, state-run West 30th Street Heliport is ludicrous. And it violates the mayor's own call for a "more civil society." He's taken on taxis, he's taken on bikers, he's taken on car alarms, club music and "similar annoyances," according to his February address, "The Next Phase of Quality of Life: Creating a More Civil Society."

A small army of Westsiders who have spent days, nights, hours writing letters and speaking out at public hearings, would quickly argue that helicopters are, in fact, a "similar annoyance." These people could and should be using their energy for bigger and better, or just more relaxing, things.

Without question, the potentially great Hudson River Park should not be marred with a heliport. The city and state will be investing millions of dollars to help create an escape for New Yorkers from the headache of the city bustle. Whirling helicopters defeat this purpose. If he's moving toward a more civil society, the mayor's next target should be news choppers and corporate 'copters. ☒

HNC p 405

# Whirling Dervish of the West Side

## City Officials Eye Hudson Piers for Heliport

BY SAM BRUCHEY

Colleen Caron remembers a time when she rocked her children to sleep in a hammock in their private garden behind her apartment. "But because of all the helicopters," said the Chelsea resident, "those days are long gone."

Although sounding a bit like some futuristic paranoia — the premise for a Bruce Willis sci-fi ad-

venture flick, perhaps — concern among West Side residents about increased helicopter traffic in and

around Manhattan has become a reality. Caron is one of hundreds of members of the Hudson River Branch, a West Side chapter of the citywide Helicopter Noise Coalition (HNC) united to eliminate all

See HELIPORT, Page 19

## HELIPORT

Continued from Page 1

but emergency helicopter traffic from the city skies.

And while legislation to bring the Hudson River Park one step closer to a reality now circulates in Albany, the city administration is discussing how to make the economically viable business of helicopters a part of the park. Piers 72 and 76, at 32nd and 36th streets respectively, have fallen onto the Economic Development Corporation's radar screen. Residents fear this threat of a worsening noise and safety problem they feel is already out of control.

The preliminary versions of the Hudson River Park Act, co-sponsored by State Assemb. Dick Gottfried and State Sen. Franz Leichter, allowed for a new heliport to be built in the park on those piers.

But after mounting opposition, largely by West Side community boards and local organizations, language in the bill allowing for a new heliport was dropped. Community Board 2, for example, passed a resolution a few weeks ago in support of the Hudson River Park Act, but only after sponsors of the bill complied with its objections that a heliport did not belong within the confines of a recreational park.

Still, many residents are concerned that the bill may change

again, allowing for heliports, when it comes up against opposition by conservative lawmakers. "The bill may be in our favor right now," said Joy Held, president of the Helicopter Noise Coalition, "but until it becomes law, it can be changed, and different language can be put back in."

The EDC is currently drafting a Heliport/Helicopter System Master Plan to address the dramatic increases in helicopter traffic over New York over the last several years. Its release is expected in the next few months.

Meanwhile, several community groups and politicians fear that the EDC's plan will focus more on how to increase commercial development than on creating safety regulations. Assemb. Scott Stringer submitted testimony at a community board hearing last week lamenting that no single federal agency had adequate jurisdiction to fully regulate helicopter traffic. He also expressed support for the U.S. Senate's Quiet Communities Act of 1997, which, if passed, would empower the Environmental Protection Agency to re-open the Office of Noise Abatement in New York City.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler echoed these sentiments in an issued statement expressing concern that insufficient helicopter flight regulations was the impetus for his Helicopter Noise Con-

trol and Safety Act, a bill he co-sponsored that would give the Federal Aviation Administration greater authority to regulate helicopter traffic. The bill is currently before the House Subcommittee on Aviation.

The HNC supports these statements, but they don't stop there; the coalition is hoping for a complete ban on all non-emergency helicopter flights in and around Manhattan. Albeit a long shot, it currently has a lawsuit pending against the city of New York and other defendants for the closing of the E. 34th Street Heliport, one of

three heliports located in Manhattan. The coalition is also considering a similar legal action with the objective of permanently closing the state-operated heliport on W. 30th Street. (The third heliport is located on Wall Street.)

HNC members are scheduled to meet with City Councilmember Stanley Michels next week to discuss other possible actions.

"Right now, we don't have the resources to go after all the heliports at once," said Held. "We have to go one site at a time, which will cause a temporary imbalance. But that doesn't mean we aren't moving in a straightforward line to where we want to be." ■

HNC P406

THE WEST SIDE

SINCE 1972

# Whirling Dervish of the West Side

## City Officials Eye Hudson Piers for Heliport

BY SAM BRUCHEY

Colleen Caron remembers a time when she rocked her children to sleep in a hammock in their private garden behind her apartment. "But because of all the helicopters," said the Chelsea resident, "those days are long gone."

Although sounding a bit like some futuristic paranoia — the premise for a Bruce Willis sci-fi ad-venture flick, perhaps — concern among West Side residents about increased helicopter traffic in and

around Manhattan has become a reality. Caron is one of hundreds of members of the Hudson River Branch, a West Side chapter of the citywide Helicopter Noise Coalition (HNC) united to eliminate all

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### HELIPORT

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but emergency helicopter traffic from the city skies.

And while legislation to bring the Hudson River Park one step closer to a reality now circulates in Albany, the city administration is discussing how to make the economically viable business of helicopters a part of the park. Piers 72 and 76, at 32nd and 36th streets respectively, have fallen onto the Economic Development Corporation's radar screen. Residents fear this threat of a worsening noise and safety problem they feel is already out of control.

The preliminary versions of the Hudson River Park Act, co-sponsored by State Assemb. Dick Gottfried and State Sen. Franz Lichter, allowed for a new heliport to be built in the park on those piers.

But after mounting opposition, largely by West Side community boards and local organizations, language in the bill allowing for a new heliport was dropped. Community Board 2, for example, passed a resolution a few weeks ago in support of the Hudson River Park Act, but only after sponsors of the bill complied with its objections that a heliport did not belong within the confines of a recreational park.

Still, many residents are concerned that the bill may change

again, allowing for heliports, when it comes up against opposition by conservative lawmakers.

"The bill may be in our favor right now," said Joy Held, president of the Helicopter Noise Coalition, "but until it becomes law, it can be changed, and different language can be put back in."

The EDC is currently drafting a Heliport/Helicopter System Master Plan to address the dramatic increases in helicopter traffic over New York over the last several years. Its release is expected in the next few months.

Meanwhile, several community groups and politicians fear that the EDC's plan will focus more on how to increase commercial development than on creating safety regulations. Assemb. Scott Stringer submitted testimony at a community board hearing last week lamenting that no single federal agency had adequate jurisdiction to fully regulate helicopter traffic. He also expressed support for the U.S. Senate's Quiet Communities Act of 1997, which, if passed, would empower the Environmental Protection Agency to re-open the Office of Noise Abatement in New York City.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler echoed these sentiments in an issued statement expressing concern that insufficient helicopter flight regulations was the impetus for his Helicopter Noise Con-

trol and Safety Act, a bill he co-sponsored that would give the Federal Aviation Administration greater authority to regulate helicopter traffic. The bill is currently before the House Subcommittee on Aviation.

The HNC supports these statements, but they don't stop there; the coalition is hoping for a complete ban on all non-emergency helicopter flights in and around Manhattan. Albeit a long shot, it currently has a lawsuit pending against the city of New York and other defendants for the closing of the E. 34th Street Heliport, one of

three heliports located in Manhattan. The coalition is also considering a similar legal action with the objective of permanently closing the state-operated heliport on W. 30th Street. (The third heliport is located on Wall Street.)

HNC members are scheduled to meet with City Councilmember Stanley Michels next week to discuss other possible actions.

"Right now, we don't have the resources to go after all the heliports at once," said Held. "We have to go one site at a time, which will cause a temporary imbalance. But that doesn't mean we aren't moving in a straightforward line to where we want to be." ■

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ELIZABETH KOLBERT

Metro Matters

## Well, Swoosh! It's the Old McBall Game

*"I believe that we need to hear from the taxpayers before we sink a billion dollars into a new stadium in Manhattan."*

*City Council Speaker Peter F. Vallone, proposing to put a referendum about a new ballpark on the ballot.*

*"That's sort of the absence of leadership. I got elected to be a leader, not a panderer."*

*Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, dismissing the idea.*

**A**NNOUNCER NO. 1: It's great to be here, isn't it Joe?

Announcer No. 2: Sure is.

No. 1: Historic moment. And what a day it is! The sun is shining. The fans are cheering. And the new stadium, it just looks terrific. Words don't do it justice.

No. 2: It's been a long, uneven road to get here, hasn't it, Bob?

No. 1: Well, yes, there have been ups and downs, no two ways about it. But it all seems worth it this sparkling afternoon, here at the I-Can't-Believe-It's-Not-Butter Stadium.

No. 2: It's really a shame, Bob, Rudy Giuliani couldn't be here to throw the first pitch.

No. 1: Yup, Joe, the former Mayor sure would have enjoyed this. He certainly deserved it.

No. 2: Yeah, no one else believed it was possible. I mean, putting a huge 60,000-seat stadium with 15,000 parking spaces smack dab in the middle of one of the most expensive and congested urban areas in the world? Must have sounded crazy at the time.

No. 1: He certainly was a dreamer.

No. 2: A visionary.

No. 1: A leader.

No. 2: What was his famous line again: "Bronx, Schmonx?"

No. 1: Nothing stood in his way.

No. 2: Nope.

No. 1: And how do the new New York-MCI Yankees look, Joe?

No. 2: Just terrific, Bob.

No. 1: Those pinstripes — you know, I don't miss them a bit.

No. 2: Me, either. The Swoosh, I mean it's great!

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THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 1998

No. 1: It's amazing, isn't it, how the team's gotten back together after all the lawsuits and the injunctions? Who could tell they haven't played for the last 30 years, waiting for the courts to settle things?

No. 2: Those West Siders!

No. 1: Incredible how they held on.

No. 2: And the environmentalists!

No. 1: Geez!

No. 2: You can just imagine how excited the fans are. Think of it, the Yankees playing ball again!

No. 1: And the really great thing is the stadium, which by the time it was finished ran to, what, \$5 billion —

No. 2: Seven if you count the legal fees.

No. 1: Seven billion —

No. 2: Well, nine, really, when you add in the rerouting of the Lincoln Tunnel.

No. 1: Nine billion, and the whole thing didn't cost taxpayers a single penny.

No. 2: Who'd have guessed you could squeeze so much money out of the New York City school budget?

No. 1: That took thinking big.

No. 2: Leadership.

No. 1: And what about those skyboxes! State of the art.

No. 2: The heliport's really working out well, too, I hear.

No. 1: Too bad about some of the back-ups on the West Side Highway. There's a bit of a mess, too, I hear, in midtown, what with the gridlock and all. But what can you expect opening day?

No. 2: How long did that guy say it took to get in from the Island?

No. 1: He must have been exaggerating. Hell, you could crawl in faster than that.

No. 2: Certainly a great view from up here.

No. 1: Yes, and it should be a great game.

No. 2: A great game in a great city. We should be starting any moment now, so stay with us for this historic broadcast. In just a few minutes we will be bringing you the singing of the National Anthem and the Pepsi jingle. Then it's game time!

No. 1: Rudy Giuliani, if you can hear us, this one's for you.

No. 2: Yes, hats off to you, Rudy, wherever you are. Meanwhile, stay tuned, MCI-Yankee fans. We'll be back in just a moment to play McBall!

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